■ ENTERTAINMENT / A2-6
Mother's Day letter of Amalia explains tiff with Liezl, Albert

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Farm output growing 5% in Q1 helped by big corn, rice harvests

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8 branches of cell phone store raided for downloading services for a fee

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Thursday, May 11, 2006 ** 4 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 152 P18 website: www.inq7.net

AFP admits taking cut from RP peacekeepers' pay

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

TALK ABOUT THE "life leveled out" of all.

Filipino peacekeepers have taken a cut in their $1,000 monthly allowance supplied by the United Nations to allow

AFP ADMITS A1

SHE'S HOT. Chili peppers cover up model Isabel Rosen in a new ad of the People for Ethical Treatment of Animals suggesting to spice up your life by going vegetarian.

Population growth down

300 freed OFWs ready to fly home with GMA

By Fe Zamora

RIYADH—PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo flies home Wednesday night—early today in Manila—with a list of more than 300 Filipinos granted clemency by King Abdullah upon her request, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas reported.

The first batch of freed prisoners comprising 52 women was due to depart Riyadh aboard a Gulfair flight at 10:40 p.m. [3:40 a.m. today Manila time] ahead of Ms Arroyo's entourage that was to fly back to the Philippines from nearby Bhutan.

300 FREED A1

GMA takes direct control of Pagcor

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo has taken back direct control of the government's cash cows—the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) and the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO).

The move was ostensibly made to ensure quick and sufficient funding for the President's multi-billion-peso social projects, such as mass housing, food subsidies,

GMA TAKES A4

THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR LOVE: Though she lives in a 15 sq. m. corner in Vitas, Tondo, and survives on P50 a day, Salvacion Ruiz, who has two other children, adopted Sandin Lee when he was abandoned by his mother. LOVEN MORENO

Poor mom with rich heart adopts unwanted baby

By Christine V. Esguerra

FOR THREE PEOPLE SURVIVING on P50 a day in a squatter community in Manila, another mouth to feed ought to be the last thing on their minds.

But Salvacion "Sally" Ruiz, 38, and her two grown children did not hesitate to welcome Sandin Lee, a bouncing baby boy abandoned by his teenaged mother to the family's 15-square-meter shanty in Vitas, Tondo.

Sally, a widow of eight years, was prepared to adopt the child even before he was born.

She had been yearning for a baby in the house because her own children—daughter Merlyn, 20, and son Subnar, 25—were always away at work.

It was also Sally's way of convincing the mother, then 18, to keep what was to be her second child.

The mother had wanted to abort the pregnancy, convinced that she was not up to the responsibility.

"But abortion is just wrong. Babies don't deserve to die," Sally said emphatically in Pilipino in an interview yesterday with the Inquirer.

The story of Sandin Lee illus-

POOR A8

Gov't sees fewer poor Filipinos in 2010

By Michelle V. Remo and Christian V. Esguerra

THE PHILIPPINES' ANnual population growth slowed down to a rate of 1.95 percent last year, prompting economic authorities to say that the deceleration would help make the country's poverty-reduction goal within reach.

Should this growth rate be sustained, the Philippines would have over 94 million people by 2010, the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) reported yesterday.

The Philippine population growth rate stood at 2.1 percent from 2000 to 2004. As of last year, the population was estimated at 86.2 million.

Romulo Neri, director general of the National Economic and Development Authority, noted that the latest population growth rate was nearing the government's medium-term target of 1.94 percent.

Neri said slowing down population growth to 1.94 percent a year was necessary to enable the Philippine economy to feed and sustain its entire population.

Achieving the 1.94 percent

POPULATION A8

Quake blacks out C. Visayas

A RELATIVELY MILD EARTHQUAKE YESTERday shook Leyte island, leaving several million people in Central Visayas without electricity for about seven hours, but seismologists said there were no immediate reports of other damage.

The quake, initially measured at magnitude 5.7, knocked down a transmission tower in Ormoc City, and three power plants on the island were shut down as a precautionary measure, National Transmission Co. (Transco) president Alan Ortiz said.

No casualties were reported, the Office of Civil Defense in Manila said.

The shallow quake struck Leyte at 10:02 a.m., the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said in an advisory.

The quake's epicenter was located 14 km northeast of Ormoc City, Phivolcs said. It

QUAKE A11

SUMMER'S SMOKE
Firefighters are kept busy on Wednesday with four fires hitting Metro Manila one after the other. This one hit Lachar Street in Pasay where 120 families lost their homes even as one victim paddles toward what remains of his house to salvage whatever. (Story in Metro, Page A16)

'TABAKO' AND THE TERMINATOR
Former President Fidel Ramos met last week with California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger at the governor's mansion in Sacramento, Calif. Also pictured are former US Secretary of State George Schultz (3rd from left) and California Chief of Protocol Charlotte Schultz.

Court grants Nur plea for house arrest

By Tarra V. Quismundo

JAILED MORO REBEL LEADER Nur Misuari and his spiritual adviser are to be housemates in a Quezon City house for the next 45 days, as a Makati court yesterday granted their petition to be placed under house arrest while undergoing medical treatment.

Misuari and Ustadz Abubakr Usman, who are charged with the nonbailable offense of rebellion for the bloody 2001 uprising in Jolo, have been allowed to stay at No. 27 6th Street, New Manila, according to the order issued by Makati Judge Elmo Morello Jr.

The judge said the two detainees would pay for their living expenses while under house arrest.

Misuari's new quarters are about eight blocks away from the

COURT A7

SC chief fears rise of greedy legal eagles

By Armand N. Nocum

THE WAY SOME LAWYERS ARE throwing legal ethics to the wind, they may just turn out to be worse than the moneyed criminals they are defending in court.

Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban voiced this apprehension as he noted that legal technicalities were being used to advance the interests not only of clients but also of the lawyers themselves at the expense of justice.

"Society has the most to fear from this crop of lawyers who have a wealth of legal knowledge but a threadbare ethical mooring; they may turn out to be worse than the criminal they defend," Panganiban said at the oath-taking ceremony for 1,528 new lawyers on Tuesday.

"In a society in constant flux such as ours, there is an ever-growing temptation to cut corners for easy solutions. Sadly, some lawyers have become merely adept at being legal technicians defending their client's causes," he said.

"They have lost sight of the fact that their duty, first and foremost, is to serve the ends of justice, and that their primary fidelity is to the courts

SC CHIEF A11

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2006
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Foes find GMA guilty in 'trial'

By Norman Bordadora

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo has been found guilty of corruption and of electoral fraud in a mock trial conducted by civil and political groups opposed to her rule.

The month-long investigation and trial organized by the tribunal calling itself the Citizens' Congress for Truth and Accountability (CCTA) has no legal value but have helped to keep the heat on the President exactly a year after vote-rigging and corruption scandals emerged to rock her presidency.

The CCTA, which started its proceedings in late 2005, supposedly found Ms Arroyo guilty of electoral fraud, human rights violations and graft and corruption.

Former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr., who chairs the CCTA fact-finding committee, said the group would send a complaint to the United Nations that he said could lead to the nullification of the 2004 elections and the holding of snap polls.

Complaint to UN

Guingona said a draft complaint would be filed before the UN Human Rights Committee under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, requesting that the UN send to the incumbent a fact-finding mission to verify the evidence of electoral fraud gathered by the CCTA.

The CCTA presented at a press conference a 200-page report recommending Ms Arroyo's resignation and the filing of charges against her.

VICTORIES Vice President Teofisto Guingona turns over copies of the final report of the fact-finding committee to Rep. Francis Escudero and Bc Antonio Lagdameo. (JOAN BONDOC)

The President has steadfastly refused to step down.

After hearing 22 witnesses and reviewing voluminous documents in five public hearings, the 13-member CCTA "presidium" found that Ms Arroyo illegally diverted her way to the presidency by tampering election results in four vote-rich provinces.

More than P7 billion in state funds were allegedly used to fund government projects allegedly designed to lure large numbers of votes for Ms Arroyo in the 2004 presidential elections, the organizers said.

Guingona alleged the Arroyo camp may have stolen up to 1.1 million votes to ensure her victory.

Human rights violations

The CCTA also found the President liable for massive human rights violations and political persecution, citing her failure to stop abductions and killings of political activists allegedly committed by policemen and soldiers.

It also urged "the international community to withdraw aid and recognition from the Arroyo government."

The CCTA asked the President or her representatives to offer evidence in her defense but nobody came.

There was no immediate reaction from the President, who is visiting Saudi Arabia, or her officials but her camp has dismissed the mock trial as an attempt by power-hungry opposition rabble-rousers to revive complaints similar to the impeachment raps that were trashed by Congress last September.

The committee report was received by the House Minority Leader Francis Escudero and civil society leader Bc. Antonio Lagdameo of the Bukluran ng Kristiyanong Tagalog and the minority was already preparing a fresh impeachment complaint against Ms Arroyo.

"Whether we like it or not, impeachment will still be the only proper way to have the President removed," Escudero said.

Palace set to appeal SC rulings on EO 464, PP 1017

MALACAÑANG WILL FILE WITHin the next few days its motion for reconsideration striking down the Supreme Court ruling on Executive Order No. 464 and Proclamation 1017.

"We are hopeful the High Court will somehow, after taking second look, reconsider these portions of the decision that we will appeal," said Solicitor General Antonio Bautista in a phone interview.

Malacañang's legal team will defend saving of setbacks in the last few weeks with the tribunal describing down the President's calibrated pre-emptive response (CPR) policy on street protesters; an order barring all Cabinet officials, government executives and authorized officers from appearing in congressional hearings without her consent (EO 464); and her declaration of a state of national emergency (PP 1017).

Bautista said the government would appeal the ruling on 1017 specifically on its decision that President Macapagal-Arroyo "must first get legislative authorization to exercise her powers granted under the Constitution (section 17 of Article 12) to take over public and businesses vested with public interest."

Malacañang is also set to appeal the high court's ruling on the constitutionality of warrantless arrests and the violation of the freedom of expression in the government's physical presence in a daily broadsheet.

Bautista said the issue would file by Friday in Manila as the government's appeal on the SC decision on EO 464.

Nachura said the government would not appeal anymore the ruling on CPR considering that the justices upheld the constitutionality of the "no permit, no rally" under Batasan Pambansa 880.

Other officials, meanwhile, insisted fulfilled about the meaning of the high tribunal's decision.

The Philippine National Police wanted a "clarification" of the court's ruling on the arrest of demonstrating activists last February.

"According to them (justices), arrestations were unconstitutional, otherwise based charges in a prosecution in one rules of court that legal, not warrantless arrest," said police spokesperson Senior Supt. Samuel Pagdilao, himself a lawyer.

Pagdilao cited Section 5, Section 113 of the rules of court in presenting such arrests.

He also maintained that their actions that week were "well within the parameters" of this rule.

"Now, they are saying that it is unlawful unconstitutional. So we want that clarified further," he added.

Pagdilao's immediate superior, PNP Chief Director General Arturo Lomibao, said their actions were "defensible."

"So I don't think there should be an apology," he said when asked if the SC's series of rulings against the government meant that an apology to people the police had arrested or places they had raided was in order.

Palace names 4 new justices to appeals court

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY announced the appointments of four new associate justices to the Court of Appeals and one to the Sandiganbayan, and a new deputy ombudsman for the Commission on Audit.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita made the announcement during a briefing in Malacañang.

The four new appellate associate justices—Romeo F. Barza (Makati City Regional Trial Court Branch 209), Marilyn Yaiza (presiding judge Quezon City RTC Branch 93), Agnes Reyes (Quezon City RTC Branch 106)—have a combined experience of 130 years in law practice.

The new Sandiganbayan associate justice is Samuel Martires (La Union RTC Branch 32) has 29 years experience in law practice.

Ermita also announced the appointment of Jeanne D. Paguio Jr. who will take the place of Deputy COA deputy commissioner Emmanuel Dalmas.

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Drilon-Villar Senate deal to face test

THE TERM-SHARING AGREEMENT BETWEEN SENATE President Franklin Drilon and Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. will be put to a test when the 13th Congress opens its third regular session in July.

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile yesterday added his voice to the growing opinion that the pair could not impose their pact on the chamber, and maintained that anybody aspiring for the Senate presidency has to go through a vote.

"With due respect to them, they can't decide for the chamber. Their decision is their decision. It will still have to be submitted to the chamber for voting. We've not bound by any agreements in the Senate," he said in a briefing.

"I'm not party to the agreements," he added, echoing a view expressed by Senators Richard Gordon and Manuel "Lito" Lapid Jr.

Enrile said that if Drilon would voluntarily yield his post in July, Villar or any senator for that matter should be prepared to contest the post in an election.

"If Frank Drilon, being a party to the gentlemen's agreement, will voluntarily relinquish, then Manny Villar will be free to seek position. I don't know if there's anyone who would challenge him," he said in a briefing.

Question of numbers

"It's a question of numbers," he added, noting that anybody who could muster 13 votes in the 23-member chamber could stake the post. "Anybody can become the Senate President if he has the numbers."

The senator said he expected Drilon as well as those who voted for him for Senate President to support Villar if he declares interest, but he himself kept the press guessing how he would vote if the time comes.

"I don't know yet how I will vote to that event," he said.

Enrile had joined the bloc of Drilon, who broke away early this year from Malacañang's attempt to change charter by last year amid charges she stole the presidency in the May 2004 elections.

Drilon, who is attending the Inter-Parliamentary Union summit in Kenya, and Villar could not be reached for comment.

The pair forged the agreement on July 12, 2004—supposedly to ensure continuous lawmaking and smooth legislative work in view of the then looming fiscal crisis.

Under the deal, Drilon would serve as Senate President during the first two years, or the first two regular sessions of the 13th Congress, and Villar, the third year or third regular session, which begins in July this year.

Palace to RP: Vietnam can't help on oil

RP asks Viets to explain oil site on Spratlys

THE PHILIPPINES WILL seek clarification from Vietnam over reports that a senior firm will soon launch a textile plant service in the disputed Spratly Islands, a foreign office source said Wednesday.

Ninghone is expected to launch its service in the islands next month, Reuters Tim Hoang, director of a government Vietnam service center based in Vietnam's second province of Danang, told AFP Monday.

"We have not received any official confirmation on that report," the foreign office source said, revealing that a node of conduct among claimants to the Spratlys prevents any of them creating up structures that could disrupt the status quo.

The Spratlys chain is claimed in whole or in part by Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

All except Brunei maintain a military presence in the area, which is considered a potential flashpoint in Southeast Asia. *AFP*

House slams Senate for 'obsession' to oust GMA

By Michael Lim Ubac

IN AN APPARENT REMEDIAL OF INTERparliamentary courtesy, the House majority yesterday lashed at the Senate for its "obsession to oust" President Macapagal-Arroyo after senators vowed to probe their colleagues' testimonies into the rigging reportedly sent to the "Hello Garci" wiretapping scandal.

"Their obsession to oust President Arroyo has blinded their primary task to legislate. They are now the National Anti-Profiling Investigators of the Republic," said Rizal Representative Cesar Sarmiento (2nd District, Antipolo City).

After a month-long Lenten break, Congress will resume its sessions on Monday.

Sarmiento said that should the Senate continue neglecting its legislative function, it "may as well be the police or the Commission on Audit and the Office of the Ombudsman, the head and the judge combined are senators of the Republic."

He renewed his call to Senate President Franklin Drilon to focus on legislating important measures instead of pursuing congressional inquiries which, he said, was aimed at discrediting the Arroyo government.

Sarmiento, who heads the powerful House committee on rules, noted the statement of the Senate vowed to continue its investigations of anomalies and allegations against the President and her officials.

What is espionage?

On Monday last, Rodolfo Biazon, chair of the Senate committee on national defense, said he was considering conducting an inquiry into the espionage case involving former intelligence insider Cmdr. Leandro Aragoncillo and three opposition leaders, to come up with clear-cut espionage.

So far, espionage had not been not clearly defined in the Articles of War, said Biazon.

Biazon also called the hearings on the "Hello Garci" wiretapping scandal "could create not work and would focus on electoral fraud.

Sarmiento and several House-approved measures in the Senate had long been overdue.

Congress has only nine more days before its mid-May adjournment on June, followed by more than a month-long recess.

Up for deliberation by the Senate are the House-approved P1.9-billion national budget appropriations bill, anti-terror bill, bill encouraging nationwide wage earners from tax, money disappearance bill and fullfare rates bill, among others.

"They are wasting time investigating without legislating," Sarmiento said.

House Deputy Majority Leader Rodolfo Antonino had a different take on the Senate inquiries and its continued refusal to support Charter change.

"Obviously, the opposition is still sticking to their plan of ousting the President and Vice President Noli de Castro in order to install their own kind of President, who obviously would be Senate President Franklin Drilon following the constitutional succession of powers," said Antonino.

The pro-administration lawmaker expected that once Drilon is sworn into control, De Castro would be forced to resign, while Drilon would become acting President.

"As such, he must call for elections for both positions under Article 7, Section 10 of the 1987 Constitution where he can also run for President," said Antonino, explaining that as acting President, "Drilon, the candidate, would have the entire executive branch, the armed forces, the Philippine National Police and the local government units at his disposal to ensure victory."

Death sentence of 79 convicts commuted to life

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO HAS granted executive clemency to 79 death convicts barely a month after announcing her new policy of bringing any executions under her watch.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the order commuting the sentences of the 79 death convicts was signed by Ms Arroyo on May 4. The list was endorsed by the Department of Justice and Bureau of Corrections.

"This move has come as no surprise after the President announced in her State message this year that she was commuting the maximum penalty on all death row convicts to life imprisonment."

But Malacañang executives had to clarify the President's policy after legal experts questioned the President's move to commute the death penalty on a wholesale basis when the laws clearly state that such pardon be granted on a case-by-case basis.

Malacañang also announced that the President was endorsing an appeal a bill seeking the abolition of the death penalty in keeping with the Catholic Church's stand on capital punishment. No execution has been undertaken under the Arroyo administration.

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Justice Edilberto G. Sandoval – Chairman, 2nd Division of the Sandiganbayan and is the most senior in rank and judicial experience among Sandiganbayan justices. Valedictorian and cum laude, 1954 Law School 1961.

Rose Pacifico A. Ayaloc – Dean, Lyceum Law School. Dean, UP Law School (1989-1993). Graduated LL.B. U.P. Law 1966, Yale Law School, LL.M., J.S.D., 1969. He is an authority in constitutional law. Partner, Ayaloc Velasco Barrameda Laparan & De Castro

Atty. Efipon L. Montero, Jr. – Chief, Anti-Fraud Division, National Bureau of Investigation. He leads various operations involving search warrants, seizures, and warrants of arrest.

M/Gen Pantaleon G. Diamlan, Jr. (ret.) – Deputy Director General, PNP, Commanding General – Criminal Investigation Service & Narcotics Command. He is also a practicing lawyer.

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TANAUAN POLL CASE

SC upholds Comelec ruling ousting mayor

By Armando N. Nemeño in Manila, and Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

THE SUPREME COURT HAS upheld the decision of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to oust Sonia Torres-Aquino as the duly elected mayor of Tanauan City, Batangas, ending a dispute that led to the brewing of the city's bank accounts since last February.

In a four-page resolution released last Monday, the court threw out a petition by former Mayor Alfredo C. Corona questioning the Comelec's ruling and asking the court to overturn the poll body from enforcing its decision.

Immediately after the Supreme Court's ruling was released last Monday, Torres-Aquino told reporters at her office that she supported Corona in respect the decision. "Sa umpisa (at the beginning) sinabi ko (I said) that we would only honor a decision from the Supreme Court."

Economic development

"Finally, the city of Tanauan can now move on," she added. "With the decision of the Supreme Court, we can proceed with our plans for better service and economic development for our people."

She called on pro-Corona city councilors to pass a resolution allowing her to enter into financial transactions in behalf of the city government. The council had refused to grant such a resolution, prompting the local branch of the Land Bank of the Philippines to freeze the city's bank account as it could not honor the mayor's signature without the resolution.

The unsigned was adversely affected the functions of the city government as Corona and his followers had originally refused to leave his office to preserve the Comelec's decision to install Torres-Aquino as city mayor last Feb. 9. Corona eventually gave up the post and went to the Supreme Court.

The case stemmed from an election protest against Corona filed by Torres-Aquino which was assigned to the Comelec's second division, which had only Commissioners Mehol K. Sadain and Florentino Tuason, Jr. as members. Comelec Chair Benjamin S. Abalos appointed Commissioner Rufus B. Javier as the third member.

On Dec. 22, the panel ruled in favor of Torres Aquino, with Tuason dissenting, and later issued a writ of execution.

En banc decision

But Corona petitioned for a reconsideration of the decision, and the case was taken up by the Comelec en banc. Two commissioners inhibited themselves, two voted for the motion but the two others voted to reject it.

But with the impending retirement of two commissioners, the Comelec decided en banc (on Feb. 2) to enforce the writ of execution earlier issued by its second division, in effect upholding its earlier ruling.

It was at this point that Corona went to the Supreme Court, questioning Abalos' appointment of a third commissioner to the Comelec's second division. He said the Comelec should have also conducted another hearing.

But the high court said the Comelec rules and procedures "clearly sanctioned the appointment made by (Abalos)."

The court also ruled that following the retirement of the two commissioners, the Comelec "may no longer act the case for rehearing." It added that "since the commission en banc was equally divided in opinion, the motion for reconsideration should be deemed lost," thus leaving the original decision of the Comelec's second division.

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PHILAMLIFE STRENGTHENS MANAGEMENT TEAM AFTER POSTING RECORD PROFIT IN '05

MAKATI CITY, May 10, 2006 – Following a robust performance in 2005 with a record 44%-consolidated net income growth for the year, The Philippine American Life and General Insurance Company (Philamlife), the country's number one life insurance company, hated the appointment of new executives to run core posts in a bid to further strengthen the organization.

Philamlife president & CEO and American International Group Inc. (AIG) country manager Jose L. Cuisia, Jr. announced that the company's Board of Directors has elected Michel Khalaf as Deputy President and Chief Operating Officer, Jack Howell as Senior Vice President (and concurrent Philam Plans President and CEO), and Terrence Cummings as First Vice President & Head of Life Profit Center.

Mr. Khalaf will manage the insurance operations of Philamlife to include its sales, marketing, agency training, insurance operations, information technology, finance and administration, controllership and actuarial divisions. He will likewise be responsible for the operations of Philamlife's insurance subsidiaries and affiliates, Philam Plans, Inc., Philam Equitable Life Assurance Company, PhilamCare Health Systems, Inc., and Philam Financials Advisory Services, Inc.

Before Mr. Khalaf's current assignment, he held a number of senior management posts in different AIG companies in several countries. He started the Egypt operations of American Life Insurance Company (ALICO), where he served as General Manager for four years, and in 2001 was appointed regional Senior Vice President for Poland and New Operations. He also served as president and CEO of AMPLICO Life with responsibility over the life, pension and mutual fund operations in Poland and the life operations in Romania, Lithuania and Latvia.

Mr. Khalaf will report directly to Mr. Cuisia, who continues to maintain overall management responsibility over the Philam Group of Companies.

As EVP and Head of Life Profit Center, Mr. Cummings will formulate product development strategies, initiate new product ideas, identify market opportunities and distribution needs, implement new initiatives to enhance and monitor profitability and processing quality and effectiveness.

Prior to his appointment, Mr. Cummings was head of the Product Development team in China.

Mr. Howell is appointed Senior Vice President of Philamlife and will be seconded to Philam Plans as President & CEO. He will have management responsibility for Philam Plans to ensure the achievement of profitability, operational efficiency and compliance with local and corporate requirements.

He joined AIG in November 2002 as part of Domestic Brokerage Group Operations and was appointed Director of Financial Management, Life Division in March 2005. He moved to Hong Kong to assume the position of Vice President for Strategic Operations in December 2005. Prior to joining AIG, he worked in professional consulting firms such as Charles River Associates, Inc. and BearingPoint Consulting Group.

His experience and expertise in financial management and strategic development will be invaluable in expanding the business success of Philam Plans.

Meanwhile, after being seconded to Philam Plans as president and CEO, Mr. Jesse G. Huffaker reassumes his key role in Philamlife as Executive Vice President for Sales, Marketing and Agency Training to fully focus on new sales & marketing initiatives aimed at maximizing the company's leadership in the life insurance industry. During his stewardship in Philam Plans, he was able to maintain the company's leadership in the pre-need industry despite the difficulties encountered by the sector and the challenges confronting the organization.

International expertise, local know-how

This development is part of AIG's worldwide effort to churn its global insurance and financial expertise among its local member companies spread across 130 countries and jurisdictions. "With AIG's formidable financial strength, unrivaled distribution, innovative products and the industry's most talented professionals, we expect this move to further strengthen the leadership of Philamlife in the country," according to Mr. Cuisia.

He further adds, "these new management changes will help ensure that Philamlife has the strongest management team to carry out our strategies and business plans for the future. Each of these new executives has a proven track record and substantial international exposure through AIG's global operations."

Philamlife is the largest and most diversified life insurance company in the country. It is the only financial institution to ever receive the Platinum Trusted Brand Award.

AIG

Search for RP seamen pressed

THE PHILIPPINE EMBASSY IN ATHENS TELLS THE South African government to ensure search and rescue operations for 30 missing Filipino crewmembers if no effort their vessel sank last week.

The appeal was also joined by the Romanian and Greek governments, the Philippine foreign office said in a statement.

The Greek-registered MV Alexandros T bulk carrier sank off the southeastern coast of South Africa last week in stormy weather.

Eighteen Filipino crewmen were among the 26 still missing, while six Filipinos and a Romanian were pleaded to safety after hours in rough seas.

AFP

DBP Development Bank of the Philippines

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND TO BID

This Development Bank of the Philippines ("DBP"), through its Bids and Awards Committee ("BAC"), hereby issues this invitation to interested parties to apply for pre-qualification and to bid for the acquisition, sale and disposition of DBP's rights, title, interest and obligations on certain non-performing loans and assets with the aggregate amount of Two Hundred Fourteen Million One Hundred Forty Thousand and 00/100 (P214,140,000.00). The non-performing loans and assets will be sold on CASH BASIS ONLY, AS-IS, WHERE-IS BASIS AND NO RECOURSE. ("DBP")

The non-performing loans and assets will be sold through a sealed bid public auction process. Detailed Bidding Guidelines and Information Materials will be provided to each bidder that qualifies to participate in the public auction.

All interested parties may obtain copies by on May 11, 2006 to May 22, 2006, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. the Terms of Reference for Pre-qualification from and at the following address upon payment of non-refundable fee of Pesos: Fifty Thousand and 00/100 (P50,000.00):

THE SECRETARIAT
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE ("BAC")
c/o The Head, Remedial Management 2, Asset Management
Ground Floor, DBP Building
Development Bank of the Philippines
Sen. G. J. Puyat Avenue cor. Makati Avenue
Makati City, Philippines 1200

Each interested party that submits itself for pre-qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria set forth in the Terms of Reference for Pre-qualification.

Deadline for the submission of eligibility requirements for pre-qualification shall be on May 25, 2006 at 4:00 p.m., Manila time and is non-extendible.

THE DBP RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL INTERESTED PARTY (IES) FROM PARTICIPATING IN THE PRE-QUALIFICATION, AND, REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITY THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BID(S) AS MAY BE CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE BANK. THE DECISION OF THE BANK IS FINAL AND BINDING.

For particulars, please inquire as follows:

THE SECRETARIAT
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE ("BAC")
c/o The Head, Remedial Management 2, Asset Management
Ground Floor, DBP Building
Development Bank of the Philippines
Sen. G. J. Puyat Avenue cor. Makati Avenue
Makati City, Philippines 1200
Telephone no.: (632) 818-98-11 Locals 2197 and 2199

(Sgd.) ARMANDO G. SARAZA
Executive Vice President and
Chairman, Bids & Awards Committee

(IS)–May 11 & 12, 2006

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EUROPEAN UNION

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Interpreter : Reuben Laurente
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by Gary Granada
Interpreter : Dong Abay
CROSSROADS
by Christine Bendebel
Interpreter : Isha Alsibahi
SABAY TAYONG MAGPABAKI NG MAGANDA BUKAYOK
by Ike Villegas
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Garduce sets final assault on Everest

By Alexis Puga

VETERAN MOUNTAINEER ROMI GARduce is getting ready for the final assault on Mt. Everest, the highest mountain in the world.

In an interview over a phone and video patch, Garduce said an assault would be possible in the next few days until next week but would depend largely on the weather.

He said Everest Camp 4 had just been opened and was being stocked with supplies of the different expeditions.

Garduce, who is currently resting at the Everest Base Camp after reaching Camp 3 over the weekend, said an assault on the summit will take around seven to eight days from Base Camp.

"We need just a little more patience. Please pray for good weather and good health. I've been lucky because I'm acclimatizing very well, I'm fine," Garduce told his audience in Filipino.

FPPBE at Camp 3

Meanwhile, two members of the First Philippine Mt. Everest Expedition Team (FPMEE), Leo Oracion and Pastor Ymata, are already at Camp 3, according to co-expedition leader Benito Sebastian.

"They are setting up ropes in Camp 4 and while the snow or rain, weather permitting, they will try for the summit," Sebastian told the Inquirer.

In August last year, adventurer cousins Oracion and Ymata reached the summit Mt. Manaslu Ale (24,758 feet) in the Himalayan range and are the record for the highest altitude reached by a Filipino.

The record was broken a month later when Garduce, a systems analyst in his 30s, reached the peak of Mt. Cho Oyu (26,906 feet), the sixth-highest mountain in the world.

Good weather is important for an assault attempt. Once the climbers reach Camp 4, they will sleep a few hours only before making their final push for the summit at around midnight or early morning. This will allow them to descend in the afternoon of the next day.

The FPMEE is being supported by ABS-CBN while Garduce is being backed by rival network GMA 7.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, May 11, 2006
6th Week of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 15:22-29
Gospel: John 15:26-27

After Jesus had washed the feet of the disciples he said, "Truly, I say to you, the servant is not greater than his master, nor is the messenger greater than he who sent him. Understand this, and blessed are you if you put it to practice.

"I am not speaking of you all, because I know the ones I have chosen; but this is to fulfill the scripture that is to be fulfilled that says, 'The one who shared my table has been against me.' I tell you this now before it happens, so that when it does happen, you may know that I am He.

"Truly, I say to you, whoever welcomes the one I send, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me, welcomes the One who sent me."

Commentary

Using history, the law and the prophets as introduce them to Jesus (the Savior, Paul and his companions preach to the Jews who live in from Jerusalem and to all others who are interested. The people have heard of John the Baptist and so Paul says John's words, as having come to look for another who comes after him—to look for Jesus. And Jesus confirms this mission saying: "he who accepts anyone I send accepts me and in accepting me accepts him who sent me." "We are all bound together in the Father, the Son Word and Spirit.

LADIES OF NOTE: President Arroyo is flanked by Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas and Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago during Ms Arroyo's meeting with Filipino workers in Jeddah.

GMA IN THE COMPANY OF ROYALS

ALL-AROUND CORDIALITY? marks the meetings in Riyadh between President Arroyo and Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz (extreme right), who's also the deputy prime minister and minister of defense, on Monday. Before they settled down to business, the prince hosted a state dinner for the President.

BAREFOOT IN THE SAND: Ms Arroyo with a Saudi Aramco official visits the oil company of the Dhahran desert where Subic Petrol's majority ownership Saudi's oil minister assures the Philippine President that Saudi Arabia is prepared to make up for any oil supply shortage in the Philippines.

SOMETHING TO WRITE HOME ABOUT: OFWs eagerly reach out to President Arroyo when she meets with them at the ballroom of Le Gal Meridien in Al Khobar on the third day of her four-day state visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

ROUSING WELCOME: In Jeddah on Tuesday, Ms Arroyo is met at the Royal Terminal of the King Abdulaziz International Airport by local officials led by the Royal Chief of Protocol of the Western Region and members of the Philippine Consulate.

300 freed OFWs ready to fly home with GMA

Front page | A1

Another batch consisting of 287 jailed Overseas Filipino workers will leave May 13 aboard a chartered flight for Manila, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said.

Ms Arroyo broke the news about the pardons after a state dinner hosted by King Abdullah on Tuesday following her arrival in Riyadh for a four-day visit.

The Saudi monarch initially talked about pardoning only 56 Filipinos convicted of crimes ranging from theft to prostitution.

The list grew to 120 on Monday. On Tuesday night, Ms Arroyo said it would well go beyond 300 as Saudi authorities were still consulting with the Philippine consular officers about the release of Filipinos jailed in their areas.

"The King has given his orders, and they are complying," said Sto. Tomas.

A gift

She said some 400 Filipinos were languishing in jails in the Oil-rich kingdom, where about 1 million Filipino workers live and even those convicted of misdemeanors would be released and monetary claims against them settled off by King Abdullah.

Staff members at the consular offices were working overtime preparing the travel documents of the pardoned Filipinos.

In her speech before the Filipino community at the Le Meridien Hotel in Riyadh on Tuesday night, the President expressed her appreciation for the "humble and generous" of King Abdullah. She said she was pleased with the royal gesture and called it a "gift."

Feted with songs, dances

In her meetings with overseas Filipino workers at the open court of the Philippine Embassy compound and the ballrooms of the Le Meridien hotels in Jeddah and Riyadh, Ms Arroyo was feted with Philippine songs and dances.

Love of country as expressed in songs like "Mo ay Pilipino" permeated the venues. Without doubt, the favorite was "Bahaghari sa ere," a haunting melody of one longing to return home after years of staying abroad.

But the idea of coming home seemed just impossible to many.

Surprised at the knowledge that Ms Arroyo was at the Le Meridien Hotel in Jeddah, a maid carrier from Bahrain who delivered a package to the business center at the hotel said: "Good that she's here. Maybe she could say how the embassy people are treating OFWs here."

According him, many embassy staff members were not doing enough to help OFWs who run away from abusive employers.

Looking after own selves

"We really have to look after ourselves here," said the man, who said he had been in Jeddah for six years and asked that his name not be used.

But he would not go home, either, saying there was no job waiting for him in the Philippines. It was a question thrust at Sto. Tomas in her meetings with Filipinos.

A nurse who had been in Dammam for 10 years but not police abuse when asked if she would consider repatriating, "I have a business and a baby here. Our life is OK," she said.

Staying put despite risks

In fact, Filipinos practically provide the human engine that runs Saudi Arabia, working anywhere from the airport terminal to shopping malls, restaurants, hotels, hospitals and many homes. Many villages have also sprouted, including one in Riyadh. The Dammam mall in Jeddah has become a favorite hangout.

For Ople, special Philippine envoy to the Middle East, and OFWs, police pretend to stay abroad even under harsh conditions so as to earn money to send home.

Where the Philippine government offered to provide free transport to OFWs who wanted to go home at the height of the US war in Iraq, Ginarto said less than a dozen of them availed themselves of the offer.

Under the conditions, Ginarto said the government would only "keep them out of harm's way in their areas of work."

But the Filipino workers still yearn for home, at least in their minds and in their songs.

GMA takes direct control of Pagcor, PCSO

Front page | A1

medical services, education and utilities.

Although nearly a third of the P1-trillion national budget has been earmarked for social services, Ms Arroyo apparently feels this is not enough and has to have full control of the funds of Pagcor and PCSO as well.

Pagcor was originally under the Office of the President. It was moved to the Department of Finance in 2003 in a bid to improve performance in its management and maximize its earning capacity.

Priority projects

Based on its charter, Presidential Decree No. 1869, Pagcor is compelled to submit periodic reports of all infrastructure and socio-civic projects that were bankrolled from its earnings.

Executive Order No. 328-A signed on March 6 revamped Pagcor to Malacañang's control to a tune of P5 billion in 2005. This was exclusive of the government's 50-percent cut in the Pagcor's revenues, which amounted to P9.146 billion in 2004, up 16 percent from P7.871 billion in 2003.

A government executive, who refused to be identified because he had not received clearance to speak on the issue, said that Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita had been tasked to oversee all purchases of Pagcor worth more than P1 million.

Three weeks after meeting Pagcor, the President signed on March 29 Executive Order No. 330 which mandated the review of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office to rationalizing from the Department of Health.

Justification

The President justified the move by noting that it would "facilitate coordination of policies and programs with the view of ensuring the effective implementation of the social agenda of the Presidency."

On the 8th, Ms Arroyo cited PCSO's vital support to her social agenda as the principal agency raising and providing funds for health programs, medical assistance and services and charities national in character.

Ms Arroyo named her chief of staff, Michael Defensor, in charge of PCSO.

Centralizing ad funds

The return of Pagcor and PCSO to Malacañang's fold comes as the heels of the President's dismissal of Ermita from the government's advertising head under her communications group led by Presidencia spokesman Ignacio Bunye.

All advertising and information campaigns to be undertaken by government agencies and government-owned and controlled corporations such as Pagcor and PCSO have to be screened and approved by the Palace.

ERMITA is person all Pagcor purchases more than P1 million

GINGHAM: Directly under GMA ... once again

Court grants Nur's plea for house arrest

from page 1

St. Luke's Medical Center where he and Usman have been confined since Jan. 28, following a court order granting his medical furlough.

The two accused rebels have since asked for several extensions of their hospital stay, citing the need for continued medical treatment.

In his order, Marella said the two detainees would be allowed to live at the Sta Mesa address for medical reasons but would continue to be under the custody of the Philippine National Police during the entire period.

The judge said a hearing would be in one and a half months at the Sta Mesa house or the hospital, adding that he has not ruled out a request to be notified there at the time—to determine if his order would need to be extended.

Detained for 4 years

Manzi and Usman had been detained for four years at Fort Bonifacio in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, for their alleged role in the Jolo uprising in which some 100 people were killed.

Marella said he found merit to the petition for house arrest for several reasons. He said the 50-year-old Manzi was found to have hypertension, while Usman, 68, was being treated for diabetes.

The judge also considered the recommendations of the two rebels' attending physicians, Dr. Ma. Bella Ventura, who said "the place of confinement of both accused must have quick access to medical facilities" so they could be brought to the hospital within the minimum golden hour in case of emergency.

Marella noted that a would take from one to three months to get to St. Luke's from Fort Sto. Domingo. The judge also cited the lack of adequate medical facilities in the fort, from facility where only one physician was attending to some 800 detainees.

The judge directed PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao to supervise the implementation of the transfer of the detainees, and the PNP health service director to monitor their medical conditions and to submit a weekly report to the court.

Case for reinvestigation

Court proceedings on the rebellion case have been suspended since February, after Marella remanded the case to the Department of Justice for reinvestigation on a defense motion.

In the petition for house arrest filed by Manzi's lawyer with the Makati court last month, Manzi and Usman asked to be allowed to stay at the Quezon City house.

But the defense did not disclose who the owner of the residence was or if the two detainees would be renting or living with relatives or friends.

'Humanitarian gesture'

By Ed Zamora

TAMBOAN, SULU (MARA ITA PLOT)—INDIA Central Adviser on the Wars Powers from Duterte until yesterday than placing Dar Misuari under house arrest was a humanitarian gesture that had no bearing on the rebellion case.

Misuari's former arrest came just as a high-level team from the Self-styled Organization of Islamic Conference was to arrive in Mindanao to monitor the implementation of the second phase of the 1996 peace agreement with Misuari-led Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

Arthaljuan delegation led by Ghania met with the OIC officials in Jeddah on Tuesday to finalize the plans for the Islamic mission to Mindanao this month.

Ghania said the mission underscored the OIC in continuing to "work with closely with the government."

"There is a renewed effort now to bring MNLF and government and prepare a joint catch-up plan for Mindanao," he said.

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AFP admits taking cut . . .

from page 1

the military to cover the costs of their deployment abroad, the Armed Forces admitted yesterday.

Predictably, the 200 soldiers sent to UN peacekeeping missions in Haiti and Liberia in January did not take kindly to the cut.

Their complaint has touched the nerves of the Armed Forces, with even the military base been directed by the Department of Foreign Affairs to explain.

According to Col. Danny Baloo, head of the AFP Peacekeeping Operations Center, a "study committee" has found that the military loses as much as P4 million whenever it sends a 316-member contingent abroad for a six-month tour of duty.

He said the expenses covered uniforms, helmets, radios and other personal gear, as well as training seminars and vaccinations worth up to P15,000 per soldier.

Baloo said these expenses were shouldered by the Philippine government and not reimbursed by the United Nations.

Not enough

Actually, the United Nations reimburses governments which send peacekeeping missions abroad for Contingent-Owned Equipment (COE), or the heavy equipment brought by their troops.

The United Nations also reimburses governments for the troop cost allowances (TCA), which, in the case of soldiers sent to Haiti and Liberia, amounts to $1,000 a month each.

But Baloo said: "The reimbursement we get from the UN is not enough to cover our expenses."

To enable the AFP to cover its expenses, he said, it decided that each of the 200 soldiers sent to Haiti and Liberia would take a cut in their $1,000 monthly TCA.

But he would not say how much was taken from each soldier.

The AFP said the monthly TCA would be equivalent to three times the base pay of soldiers, and two and a half times the base pay of officers.

It surprised, the lowest ranking soldier deployed, would receive a monthly TCA of P25,894, or thrice his monthly base pay of P9,668.

Demoralization

In March, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo in it reportedly sent a memo to Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr. endorsing the "very urgent" recommendations of Ambassador Lorelei Fajardo, the Philippines' permanent representative to the United Nations.

Romulo urged the military to "temporarily hold implementation of the TCA and redeployment of the Philippine contingent" to Haiti.

He also recommended that the AFP-RSBS and Philippine National Police draw up safeguards to ensure that UN reimbursements were used "to support peacekeeping related functions."

Baloo said he spoke but work with Acting Comelec chairman Commissioner Resurreccion Borra and International Organization Affairs Assistant Secretary Jose Antonio Buenaventura Jr. to "clarify" the issue.

"They have accepted our reasons," Baloo said.

Redeployment

In 2006, after a 40-year break, the Philippines again started sending troops to UN peacekeeping missions.

The first contingent to be sent to Haiti left in July 2004, while another batch to the Ivory Coast left in August 2005.

Baloo said he is not sure if the military budget because the COE reimbursements were sufficient to cover the expenses for personnel.

But in recent statements, the costs have exceeded the reimbursements because the military could not longer used heavy equipment she said, he said.

Again, Baloo could not say how much losses were incurred by the AFP in these deployments.

He said the main controversy surrounded the cost of deploying a 180-member contingent for a six month mission as P65 million—an amount already including the reduced allowances.

To justify the cut in the soldiers' TCA, the AFP dug up a circular dated Sept. 6, 1990, which states that troops must not and are entitled to allowances equivalent to twice their base pay.

'Compensation for RP'

Baloo said the TCA was not supposed to go directly to the soldiers, anyway.

"We are overseeing our provision error when we thought that the TCA is a direct compensation of the troops from the UN. It's a compensation for the country for sending troops," he said.

According to Baloo, Filipino peacekeeping forces should ever be fatally become soldiers get a measly P240 a month in combat pay unless they are assigned to war zones in the country.

He also said the deployed troops had been briefed on the cut in their TCA.

But an e-mail sent to the troops by contingent-soldiers indicated that they were surprised by the reduced allowance.

The Philippines has deployed a total of 191 troops in six UN peacekeeping missions—in Liberia, Haiti, the Ivory Coast, Burundi, Sudan and East Timor.

It also has a small peacekeeping force in East Timor that is sponsored by the European Union.

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Population growth down to a rate of 1.95%

From page A1

target would boost the Philippines' chances of hitting its poverty-reduction goal over the medium term, he said.

The government has set a target of reducing the proportion of population living below the poverty line from 45.3 percent in 1991 to 22.7 percent by 2015.

The latest data from the NSCB showed that as of 2003, the proportion of the population living in poverty stood at 30.4 percent.

Reducing the number of people living in poverty to 22.7 percent of the population was a commitment that the Philippines made under the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations.

Unsustainable

Under those goals, UN members committed to stamp out extreme poverty by 2015.

But Ernesto Pernia, a professor of economics at the University of the Philippines, said a 1.95-per cent annual population growth rate was unsustainable.

He pointed out that it was higher compared with other developing countries in Asia.

Pernia said the Philippines should be able to slow down its population growth rate to as low as 1.6 percent, similar to that of Bangladesh, to be able to meet its poverty-reduction goals.

He described the government's effort to arrest the growing population as "practically nil," and said there had not been enough programs to promote birth control.

In response, Neri said it had been a policy of the national government to restrict population-control programs to the local government units.

He said determining appropriate measures to control population growth was up to the LGUs.

While the Philippines dominated by Catholic voices, the government has yet to make a tough stand against population growth and has left it up to couples to choose their preferred method of family planning.

The Philippines is the world's 12th most populous state, according to an Agence France-Presse report.

It said the mid-2006 population was projected at 87 million, putting the country just behind Mexico and ahead of Germany.

Within 4 years

"In a span of four years, the country will be populated by over 94 million people. This translates to a yearly population growth of 1.95 percent from 2005 to 2010," Rodolfo Domingo, officer in charge of the NSCB's office of the secretary general, said in an announcement posted at the board's website.

Domingo said the figure was based on the 2000 census-based national, regional and provincial population projections released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) last April 4.

A report from the NSO projected that the population would grow from 76.5 million, as of the latest population census in May 2000, to 141.7 million in 2040.

"This means that 65 million people would be added to the total population between 2000 and 2040, which is a span of 40 years, even if the average annual growth rate is projected to diminish gradually from 2.34 percent during the 1990-2000 period to around 1.0 percent during the 2030-2040 period," the NSO said.

FAST FACTS ON PHILIPPINE POPULATION

76.5M	The total Philippine population based on the NSO 2000 census
30.53M	Total number of males
30.5M	Total number of females
11.1M	Total number of households based on the NSO 2000 census
6	Average household size
2.36 %	Average annual growth rate in the 1990 - 2000 period
11.5M	Southern Tagalog (Reg IV) most populous. Accounting for 13.62 percent of the total population this is the biggest among the country's regions.
21	Number of provinces whose population exceeds one million
4	Total number of Filipinos born every minute according to the Commission on Population in 2002
13th	Rank of the Philippines as the most populated country in the world
93.21M	Projected total number of Filipinos (population in 2005, according to the NSO)
28	Number of years the Philippine population is expected to double

Compiled by Tonee Godoy, PEI Research
Source: National Statistics Office and NSO data archive

"The population is projected to grow by 1.95 percent in the 2005-2010 period, from 81.3 million in 2005 to 94.6 million in 2010," it said.

Pro-critics

The latest projection on population growth appeared to favor opponents of the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Management Act, a consolidated House bill seeking to provide "free and full access to information and reliable reproductive and paediatric health and a full range of family methods and devices."

Critics, particularly the Catholic Church hierarchy, have denounced the effort, saying it was merely a repackaged piece of legislation that essentially targeted population control.

Others have alleged that some of the measure's proponents stood to benefit from the expected arrival of a "condom" industry to the country should contraception be more aggressively promoted.

At present, contraceptives in the country are basically sourced from foreign donation, particularly from the United Nations Population Fund. Donations are expected to stop by 2008.

A major argument between proponents and critics of population control, as being promoted by the government, involves taxation.

Proponents claim the population growth rate is 2.36 percent while critics maintain the figure is only 1.95 percent.

Curiously, both parties usually base their numbers on the NSCB, the country's policymaking and coordinating body on statistical matters.

In another post-visit "For the Record" to its website, the NSCB said the 2.36 percent growth rate was the "average annual population growth rate for 1990-2000 based on actual 1990 and 2000 population census results."

"The latest population projections based on the 2000 census shows that the average annual growth rates for the periods 2000-2005 and 2005-2010 are projected to be 2.03 and 1.94 percent, respectively," it said, adding:

"These values should be interpreted with caution as these are projections based on certain assumptions of fertility and mortality, and are projected around average growth for the period given."

"Thus, the estimated 1.94 percent growth is projected as the average annual growth during the period 2005 to 2010. If the growth rate trend is decreasing from the 2.03 percent during the 2000-2005 period, then the 1.94-percent growth rate is likely to be attained around 2007-2008."

Women outliving men

In the latest announcement, the NSCB said 49.7 million women were expected to outlive men by 0.3 years. But the number of years was less by half than that the men outlive.

"Males (47.3 million) will still outnumber the females (46.7 million)," according to the NSCB.

a gift for mom
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Poor mom with rich heart adopts unwanted baby

From page A1

notes the continuing battle between the "pro-life" camp, which frowns on contraception or abortion as a means of controlling population growth, and the "pro-choice" sector, which advocates family-planning information campaigns and the availability of family-planning methods to couples.

Sally, a community worker of Pro-Life Philippines, firmly believes that poverty does not always equate a child of less love right to life.

She had heard similar tales of woe while going from house to house, educating couples on natural family planning and responsible parenthood.

"Here, you'll see 14-year-old girls getting pregnant and having an idea of what to do with their child," she said sadly.

Switching places

The mother, a jobless mandriver in the province, came to Sally to inquire about two months before she was due to deliver.

The father was nowhere to be found.

"She really wanted to have an abortion but I told her it's wrong," Sally said, recounting the circumstances.

During their conversation, the two women seemed to have switched places. It was Sally who was desperate to keep the child.

"If you really want him, you take care of my pregnancy and the child," the mother said, to avoid Sally classifying the "baby-to-be."

Sally agreed, took the teenager in, and arranged for bed space at a nearby lying-in clinic.

From then on, with a "second mother" willing to help her carry the load, the teenager practically bounced through her second pregnancy.

It crossed Sally's mind that the teenager might soon experience an epiphany of sorts. Perhaps, she would regret her attitude and decide to take care of her child.

That was what Sally thought. On Oct. 27, 2004, three days after Sandie Lee was born, his mothers disappeared.

Daily survival

The family survives on Salmo's P250 daily pay from collecting and selling scraps for a nearby junk shop. Marilyn was recently hired by a rock factory in Quezon City, earning a salary only before the minimum.

The time of their operate on a daily budget not exceeding P50.

In the morning, Sally buys an "order" of a fish dish costing P10 at the carinderia next door. The dish is spread for the entire day's meals, as is the bilo of rice Sally usually buys for P22.

There does not some things as P1 for every plastic container. Electricity costs P100 a week for the transformer that does not have an electric fan.

What did the arrival of Sandie Lee do to the family's daily budget?

"The Lord will solve any," Salmo said, apparently finding encouragement from a framed biblical passage hanging on a wall in the dining: "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:8)."

And Sally: "He will never be abandoned by The One up there. I really believe that God will always provide."

Answered prayers

Mother and son's belief are not exactly confined to the metaphysical. Having been with Sandie Lee for nearly two years now, they know their prayers are being answered.

The meager income Salmo and Marilyn earn are proving sufficient for the family's, including the baby's, needs.

Sandie Lee never misses on his milk feeding (P75 for a three-pack of three-days). His immunization is basically complete at this stage of his development.

In fact, the family managed to throw a small party when he turned a year old on Oct. 14 last year.

There was a cake, pansit, bread, and juice generously shared by other kids living in the unfinished Building 5, where the family along with others, had built their shanty.

Salmo even found some balloons in the course of scrounging for scraps.

"There was even a clown!" Salmo recalled. "Of course we think of it. Decorating Sandie Lee's is not really impossible. It's just a matter of working hard and keeping your faith in God."

Crises

There have been critical moments.

Water before he turned a year old, the child fell ill—the first time with severe diarrhea and vomiting, the second time with asthma-like symptoms.

Each time, Sally emptied her savings of not more than P500, or borrowed from their similarly impoverished neighbors.

Each time, too, she and her children spent sleepless nights huddled around their little angel.

Thankfully, a biological mother showed up lately to permanently check on him. She was with her new boyfriend and pregnant with her child-to-be.

Sally has only humble dreams for Sandie Lee. She wants him to have a good education and a decent and stable job in the future.

As this point, her priority is to find a way to get him out of their forsaken community.

Moving out

Called "temporary housing" and occupying Happy Land, Helping Foundation and Aisma, the place is a microcosm of the permanence of poverty.

There is simply nothing happy about it, so anything to help the residents escape the cruncle of garbage.

At Building 5, some 200 families, including Sally's family, wake up daily to piles of garbage, vandalized walls, a network of clotheslines, a queue of plastic containers.

The view is occasionally changed when police barge in looking for a thief or a drug addict.

Sally is convinced that the future will not be bright for her baby boy if they stay put.

"We have to move to a better place," she declared.

Palace won't lift finger to stop 'Da Vinci Code'

By Christine O. Avendaño

A TOP AIDE TO PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo said yesterday the Palace will not lift a finger to stop the showing of the controversial movie "The Da Vinci Code," but if by hook or by crook the movie would not be played in Philippine theaters because it is "blasphemous."

"I don't see how we, as a Catholic nation or as practicing Catholics, would ever tolerate such a plot to be propagated in the name of freedom of expression," Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita told reporters at his weekly briefing.

Ermita said that while he has not read the best-selling book by Dan Brown, he found the storyline "blasphemous" as told to him by people who have read it.

"If I know it's something (about) our Lord Jesus and Mary Magdalene... Oh my gosh!" Ermita said, stopping in mid-sentence.

"Do you think don't remember, we should talk about? We might get struck by lightning," he added in Tagalog.

The book and now the movie starring Oscar-winning actor Tom Hanks have come under attack from Catholic clergymen and Christian scholars who feel its story line is blasphemous.

Both the book and the movie say that Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene were married, establishing a bloodline kept secret through the ages by a clandestine organization that had Leonardo Da Vinci among its members.

Ermita said he was aware of the film because several Roman Catholic bishops had told him.

He said the movie would only arouse the curiosity of many "who do not have strong moorings in our faith" and "so it's better for us, as good Catholics or good religious people... to discourage this."

"If you were to ask me ... we being a Catholic country, we should do everything not to allow it to be shown," he added.

Asked if that was the advice he would give the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB), Ermita replied, "I don't want to preempt the MTRCB. They have their own procedures in reviewing motion pictures ... let the people judge the MTRCB on this particular issue."

Asked whether he would call for a boycott of the film should the MTRCB approve its showing, Ermita said he would not.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, who also attended the briefing, said he had read part of the book and was "repelled" by it. He said he has not finished reading it because he had no time to do so.

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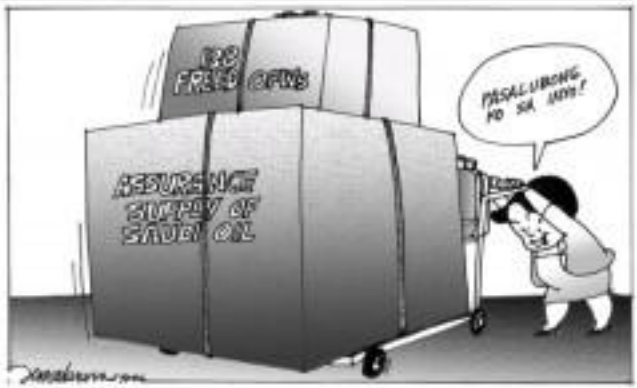

Uncivil war

IF THE ARROYO ADMINISTRATION IS SERIOUS about government reform, why is it politicizing the civil service? The official reason for its change-the Constitution campaign is to have a more cooperative—and ostensibly a more responsible—government structure.

But a cancer-destroying regimen is strong civil service. That strength is defined, in part, as political independence; civil servants enact policies in accordance to the political, even partisan, interest of the appointing powers (usually, the Executive).

EDITORIAL

The Arroyo administration does not seem to understand this, however. Even all indications, it is seeking to remake the Career Executive Service into a compliant tier of the government bureaucracy. It wants a responsive government, all right, but responsive to its own agenda.

The latest flashpoint in this war of attrition on career civil servants is the Mafia-like squeezing of the Career Service Executive Board. Consider the following sequence of events:

On March 28, the eight-person CSEB passed a resolution lambasting the "apparent politicization of the career service" by the Arroyo administration. The unprecedented resolution listed at least seven classes of "transgressions" of civil service laws and traditions.

On March 24, or four working days later, the board convened again, but without vice chair Ramon Nieva and member Gerardo Plana. They had been replaced by Malacañang.

On April 18, the board met for the third time, and member Fernando Cui was no longer present. He had been replaced by another Malacañang appointee. The rest were told that member Aurora Pagsanjan-Jao would be replaced, too.

It looks likely that the next step in this sordid power play is the engineered ouster of Civil Service Commission Chair Karina David as chair of the CSEB. As CSC chair, David is the country's top civil servant. By tradition, the CSC chair serves as CSEB chair. But with half of the members of the CSEB serving only in an acting capacity, David is vulnerable to being voted out of the board. (Hint: out of the CSC, we must point out, since that is a constitutional office and the chair has a fixed term.)

The state of affairs in the board prompted one board official to complain: "This (has) never been politicized the way (it) is. President Arroyo has politicized even the CSEB. Any of the new board members can be replaced any time."

Let's think about that for a moment. The government body that oversees the country's career officials is now under the effective control of appointees who do not have a career or speak of. Because they sit only in an acting capacity they can be removed at any time.

This is an outrage. But this is not an isolated case of government goodfellas applying the pressure to recalcitrant customers. It reflects the pattern the Arroyo administration has set and, in fact, it confirms that pattern.

The March 28 resolution's list of transgressions includes career executive service officers (CESOs) being "placed on 'floating' status," "CESOs ... relieved from their CES positions and replaced by non-eligibles," even "CESOs ... relieved from their CES positions and demoted to non-CES positions." Most challenged, the resolution quotes the chair of the Office of the President's Search Committee as saying that "a non-CES eligible occupying a CES position is considered a political opponent who serves at the pleasure of the President."

There, in the proverbial nutshell, is the whole problem. Contrary to the laws that established our career executive service, Malacañang is following a policy that allows the appointment of non-career officials to career positions, who are then considered to be serving at the President's discretion. The policy cynically subverts the very principle of the career service.

And to what end? The need for greater responsiveness may roll trippingly off the tongue of administration spokespersons, but these spokespersons are being sloppy with the truth. The truth is, career civil servants who take their responsibilities seriously are considered a threat to the administration.

Naturally. They have the public's real interest at heart.

Clout of the spirit

VIEWPOINT

Isaac L. Mercado

IN THE SACK OF THE WOODS, POWER often involves "guns, goons and gold." Answers of generations, who claim to rule us, echo that by their lives.

So, what are we to make of a king who, out of arch-legal power barely enough to decorate a state dinner, can move his nation by a single word?

When King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand speaks, his people listen," Asiaweek observed. "Only in extreme circumstance does the king touch the levers of power.... But when he does, the intervention is decisive."

Untangle the mess left by the opposition's boycott of earlier snap elections called by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the Thai king told judges in a rare address. On Monday, the court ruled that last month's elections were unconstitutional and ordered fresh polls.

People Power-style rallies endure, as Imelda Marcos and the Incorrupt Attainment in Bangkok, tied up the country. Those protested Thaksin's high-handed rule and corruption. His tax-free sale of the 40.6 percent family stake in the television company Shin Corp. in Singapore apparently was the straw that fractured the camel's back.

The king's address jolted the country. Yahoos immediately. Thailand's main judicial bodies met to discuss the situation," BBC reported. "Then, in an about-face, the Democrats announced they'd take part in a new election, if the April poll was annulled."

Yet, each year, his critical Prince intervention has someone legal anchors at hand. When the 38-year-old Bhumibol came to the throne in 1946, he was the tenth king of the Chakri dynasty, established in the 18th century. Nothing more.

A contented Rajadhani there, he had "revamped more than it took to run a ceremonial office to open a new highway," Joseph Wright of the University of Michigan pointed out in his book, "The Balancing Act."

So, where did he get all this clout?

As a United Nations officer stationed in Thailand for 17 years, we saw statement of his away from the press, he told the diarist Thanom Kittikachorn and his cabal that it would be best for the Thai people if they left. They did, on the next flight out.

In 1992, mobilized prime ministers, Gen. Suchinda Kraprayoon, and his civil Chamlong Srimuang leads while he told them to stop the bloody fighting. The blood-letting stopped.

He demonstrated customary executions of illegal drug addicts—a point relevant for death squads in Davao and Cebu. He raised his scant spiritual abuses of Muslim minorities. There were heeded.

Thaksin never revealed what the king told him in a private audience after the film Coup, scandal, but he stepped down in prime minister within a week.

Bhumibol today is the world's longest reigning—and arguably the most influential—monarch. No one thing, he didn't hope in to permitted adolescences. Travels to earliest days, the inexperienced, unschooled king was novice's concern to be the dignified unifying house for a foreign power elite," Wright points out.

Over the years, King Bhumibol gave of his time and talents to marketing the poor with projects and projects in the provinces, even as Thai politicians tried to isolate him in the capital. The grounds of Chitrlada Palace in Bangkok and other royal homes have been open almost as much visitors. He put facilities of the Royal Household at the disposal of influential people and launched three museums for the poor.

In so doing, he "defined a new role for the monarchy by 'becoming a vertical and vanguard bridges between elite and people," Wright says. He refused to become the powerbroker for factions of the Thai elite and chose "to become a truly universal leader whom no single faction could dominate or oppose."

"It's quite normal that people should see the king," he said in a remarkably candid BBC interview. "But the way of seeing depends on no also. And we are seeing things that are good for the country, and (that) we don't have any secrets."

Transparency and avoidance of self-interest were his keys. Few reminders have the young king gingerly seated his right to advise governments with responsibilities on constitutional infractions. Mahol Kongdhiran (general) threw in retaliation. Bhumibol left Bangkok on the day he was to preside over ceremonies to promulgate Thailand's constitution. That underwent legitimacy.

Those distinctions over the years into the king gradually emerge as a impartial national leader. Impeccable moral and political credentials underpinned his capacity to lead. He talks so that by his life. "To be honest, as this model goes is to be one more picked out of ten thousand," Bamlet says.

The king is now 79. What worries many (Hi genius, among others) is what happens when this remarkable man goes. "It is not to conclude such in the hinds of the Thai nation," Wright observes. "The Thai elite cannot continue to rely on the sort of sudden eleventh hour resources that King Bhumibol has in the past provided."

Nagging questions of Thai constitutional order remain unresolved. Issues. They have a baseline thing to Filipinos: Politicians need his position to influence what were meant to be independent bodies, like the Election Commission and the Constitutional Court, the opposition says.

And will Thaksin run again? Thaksin's subsequent royal consistency would cheer if he continues the public agenda. But that's indicative so has voters whose protest marches forced the snap elections.

How will this play out? we asked a Thai friend. He replied with a cryptic "But properly "In the next life—late in the afternoon."

It can be done

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

MY THANKS TO ABELARDO (BABE) POE for his generous words in his letter to the editor last Tuesday, May 9.

As to the rest of his letter: What is certain, he says, is that "the people want ERAP, not "but it "no other or day." Only the means is debatable. He begs to disagree with my call for snap elections on the following grounds: (1) there's nothing in the 1987 Constitution that sanctions it; (2) it is unfair to the early if GMA resigns, which is a remote possibility; and (3) the Comelec is thoroughly and trustworthy and can only be supported to rig the elections all over again. Instead, she does not believe in People Power anymore, because "the People Power results have turned out to be disasters, stories says."

I beg to disagree with these points. Let me take them up one by one.

First off, let me repeat my premise for snap elections (without GMA, of course) because it is a crucial point. Snap elections are not just the product of answers to problems, they are the only answer to it. They not only solve the problem of a ruler who is ruling without a mandate, they solve the problem of who to replace him with. What is the problem? The problem is that we have an illegitimate president. What is the solution? The solution is to have a legitimate president. That is done by new elections.

Electing also answer perfectly the (non-) problem of the "alternative," which GMA's allies have been shrilling like a monkey in throats to serve the biggest obstacle in the world. Who is going to replace GMA? Easy. That is not for you or me or anybody else to say. But it is for the voters to say. That is what we have elections for: so that the people may decide whom they want to lead them. Not even the GMAers have (yet) had to refuse elections. Until? Otherwise you will have the same problem: a persevere group of persons ruling without a mandate from the people.

The only question left to answer is: is it doable? Should one no for the reasons he advances? Answer: no.

The first objection is easy to answers. There was nothing either in the 1935 or the 1973 Constitutions the legal and the pseudo Comelec types that held sway in this country before and during martial law, that sanctioned snap elections. Yet we had snap elections in January 1986. That is the one area where all that's saved us is political will. You have a chance for snap elections, and that is how it's been around the world. not least in the United States (the Americans were among those who devised snap elections in Manila), you are going to have snap elections.

More to the point, as Thailand has recently shown, all that's needed is for the Supreme Court to rule that the last elections were unconstitutional and you can have new elections. What made Thailand's last elections unconstitutional was nowhere near what makes our last elections unconstitutional. The Thais never had the equivalent of Thaksin talking to no electoral commissioner demanding to win by a million votes against his rival. The Supreme Court, which has been on a roll, showers the last elections unconstitutional, we can have new elections.

Snap elections can happen only if GMA resigns? Say so all. Of course. Nothing snap elections without GMA presumes enforcing her from the equation to begin with. That can be done by three things: People Power, civil disobedience, military actions. I personally favor the first two. The second is the easiest, quite apart from the most logical thing to do, since it does not ask the public to do anything, it asks them not to do anything. Filipinos should find it the most natural thing in the world not to pay taxes or not to vote. They don't like paying taxes anyway. Filipinos should find it the easiest thing in the world as well not to behave like good citizens because they don't like being good citizens anyway. Except that in this case, they have every justification for it. Why should anyone want to be a good citizen to a fake president? GMA refuses to do it refuses to be a fake.

I've written countless times about why I still believe in Edsa. Edsa never betrayed us, nor betrayed Edsa. We did so by believing that after overthrowing a tyrant, we would all go back to where we were and could live the rest of our lives. Edsa is not the end, it is the beginning.

I still believe we can mount an Edsa—by having an idea that can inspire the People to re-Edsa their frenzy. That is now electoral. Snap elections are not just a thing that can happen after resigning GMA, they are very doable as near GMA. They are not just an effect, they are a cause. I've always thought that if the groups organizing GMA had called for snap elections last July, GMA would be gone by now. But no, they called for overturning corrupt snap elections—not least by installing corrupt appointments, never mind by us, compared by them. Why would people want to take to the streets to install them in power? Might as well stay home and watch the GMA.

So to the Comelec, that too is the easiest thing in the world. All you have to do is pressure everyone who helped staunch the computer-isation program to an illegitimate bloody, and you will revamp that thing completely. All the commissioners there, all the directors there, even those who they awarded the contract to Mega Pacific. If you can force snap elections through an erosion of political will, with everyone from the Supreme Court to the ordinary citizen turning against all, you can most certainly force a truly independent Comelec to name new elections. Pressure everyone who lied, cheated and stole the last elections. And finally, you have a vigilant public, a penitent. Startled or an independent body that hasn't been infiltrated by the executive unless people unable to resist, and an international community to observe the elections, you can have clean elections.

It can be done, and it's right time we did it.

Relative political calm boosted RP stocks

RAMON ARIBO SIX COLUMNS TWICE TO A family affair I had to unwind so, it was a pleasure to read the items on the front page from Philippine media covered in some one high, fueled by the spending spree of foreign investors. The business report underlined the surge in "the country's highest economic prospects, improving government finances, solid corporate earnings, strong overseas remittances and relative political calm." I wished to myself repeatedly while I read that thing about "relative political calm." So many of us in media have developed a keen sense of political stability in economic recovery and now here's proof of what "relative political calm" can do.

The phrase bears the added truth that the economic is also not really improving, but the political situation remains liberal. Recently a pro-administration newsbreaker was quoted in opining that political calm would prevail for some time, somehow as an implausibly easy to do. It is the kind of thing prominent Filipino opposition leaders would keep "down all balance." That wish may be short-lived. Already a big thing is being made in the media of the allegations that then Vice President Macapagal-Arroyo had plotted to oust President Ferdinand E. Marcos.

* * *

The good news about the surge of RP stocks is educed in many bullish reports on the country's economic and financial outlook in the next and medium term from various investment bank economists. Among them is JP Morgan, which assessed that in the next six months, 20 top RP businesses will have a collective trading profit of 20 percent, compared to the average increase of 11 bp. While RP's equity market lagged behind those of its neighbors in the region, its economic growth is expected to be among the strongest in Asia. Net foreign direct investments will increase in '06 dollar terms compared with the record average of 23 percent. JP Morgan predicted that RP equities, "will outperform early on, particularly as the new president on Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia."

JP Morgan also noted that RP is on track to having a balanced budget by 2008 and a surplus thereafter. Its report said that "the fiscal deficit has been continually funded by debt." It said that the nominal deficit is targeted

Political Tidbits

Belinda Olivares-Cantiveros

as full from 82 percent of GDP in 2005 to 51 percent by 2010. These targets will be achieved through an improvement in tax collection from a low of 12.4 percent of GDP in 2004, to 16.1 percent in 2006, new tax measures such as the E-VAT, and lower tax administration fee, the investments field said.

* * *

JP Morgan noted the government's efforts to improve tax collection by empowering the head of revenue, whereby salary-related performing revenue and customs officials are disbanded and performance rewarded, as well as the more decentralized office of the Department of Finance to curb illegal smuggling and tax evasion and protection thefts. What's good about having more funds, besides improving down the budget deficit that was encroached on "pork barrel" allocations, is that it doesn't be more money to spend on infrastructure projects not only to pump prime the economy but also to tackle the country's basic competitiveness.

I'll invite most of JP Morgan's notes to "best key government officials" for new RP economic reforms, the strong growth in remittances, business process outsourcing, call centers and allied industries, renewed infrastructure spending and the investment-friendly climate.

* * *

Several weeks back, I congratulated Southeast Asia Love Cost Beauty Center for the well-deserved praises heaped on her by the 400-plus opposition of the Asia-Pacific Council in Bangkok Rhinoplasty, St. Bernard. The head of the American-based advocacy group that received in the house Alberto Tolentin, Key to Korean Beauty Both City, Mayor Rudolph Ulanday in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Unfortunately I had also missed his then Toronto-based Philippine Consulate did his best ever post-nominated, by senior Tongan Lee Khoh 10 that he cited above for "Filipino" from my colleague told he recalled their days as practicing lawyers and politicians of Congress. Tongan, some 40, 2005 back to say he was moving in his whereabouts in Manila, after more than two months of being bedridden in Canada. He was also declared bankrupt but was declared active involvement in the political affairs of the country, recalling his offer to mediate the differences between the Liberal Party as evidence of his concern as a senior congressman and candidate, especially by major political parties. "I know that your experience in Congress will be of great help to the present political leaders," wrote Tongan.

* * *

Legendary playwright, theater director Alberto Magsaysay awardee for media and comedy prize James B. Reuter, S.J., will celebrate his 80th birthday on May 22. He jokes that very recently he turned "prodigiously active in the life of our nation: Among them to Fr. Pierre Teilhard, founder of Ateneo de Manila, who will turn 92 on Sept. 1st. Fr. Reuter's brother James's big day, his former students at the theater, who have formed the 2020 Foundation, will launch a book that will showcase talented players and other artists who have performed in the theater. As part of the big demand for the book, interested parties are urged to place their orders early so that the organizers can arrange the Fisher Theater to order a personal dedication. Orders may be made with Joey at stamat@ateneo.edu.ph. Sr. Mary Aurelia Cortes at St. Paul University of Manila, Tel. No. 524-0407 to 09, or Kathy Belmonte at St. Scholastica's College, Tel. No. 526-7000, loc. 720-7000, loc. 143. Checks should be payable to JBSC Foundation and due May 15.

Out of the box

THE THREE I OWNED ARE KEPT IN COLLEGE WERE packed and stored in one house two months after I did. They came in huge boxes that were held together by several rolls of packaging tape. My sister in big bold letters was serious as every side so that even the boxes got lost, sanpaper) with or without, people would know (although they'd hardly care and look) those of 10 were got their backs who created all the trails and treasures inside them.

Young Blood

Michaela Jane Ross Corpuz

It took me a while to open the boxes and reunite with my belongings. Before I finally did, first and a half years worth of memories came flooding back and I no sound dreams in my unconscious. I was content the boxes has acknowledged a chapter of my life that is over.

When I had freed all of my things from their dark, cramped refuge, I realized that I had kept them out of practicality rather than for sentimental reasons. Among others I saw my old shoes, which I wore in a child and a teenager. Just to make sure my was that the unsung fourth graders, I must be sure that I bought for myself and saved those that my friends gave me. I kept the comfy sunglasses that were left from a one-time with-or-near adventure. I refused to throw away stuffed toys scrapped by their beloved long. Freshman year and old coins, even the ones whose heads were missing, and whose dishes were called beyond recognition. I put aside the letters I received in retreats; it didn't matter if some only had "God bless!" written on them. I kept them all the same. Much does, I held on to the smallest things.

One of the constants in my diaries, I am just enough interest last a week or two because I've given away those that have been pushed to the back of my closet and have not seen the light of day for the longest time. Another has held books that I've read many times over and a photo album that hasn't been filled up yet. Another has my clothes that I've outgrown but retained for hugs and my shoes, which were down to only 10 pairs. In frustration over having to throw them and have some of them repaired, I decided to leave most of my footwear, those I could no longer see myself wearing and could be used by someone else. Also, I kept my accessories for vendors and jewelry women to take. Another box had small boxes inside of it in which watches, sunglasses and beaded jewelry were stored. I've kept just the pieces given by the very few people who are special to me. Unlike other, I was younger, and I have no qualms about saying goodbye to stuff that hasn't been used for a while. I'm sure that there are those that can make good use. Never mind that some of the things I put out with had been with me on special occasions; the world didn't stop turning when I bade them goodbye. Besides, I'm ready to make new memories and adorn new junk.

The most interesting box I had difficulty discovering was the one filled with my college notebooks, photocopied reading materials and papers of all kinds. I didn't want to part with any of my old notes because, who knows, they might be useful someday (i.e., when I apply for and land a job). I don't know if any of the timid-boggling lecturers I had in college will ever read my notes, but I'm sure that I'm not the like any other new college graduate in this country. I'd save anything that bore of scrutiny in the "university." Even if he was weighed more than all of the other boxes combined. I'm glad probably had to pay extra for that), I didn't let go of those notebooks. I'm not ready to throw away the only thing I can boast a little about: comparable and how anything. I'm after then though I'm stumped and I've learned to let go of things, and of people even, I cannot give up my aspirations and my hope of a bright future. Our government and our economy may be failing, as well as my generation's belief in the system, but I have promised myself to keep my optimism and that is what I will do.

I opened the other old notebooks and now dreading I probably wrote out of boredom. Some were pictures of Ronnie and more, which are basically the only things I can draw. Some were lists of things to do that I'm sure by now that some were unfinished verses and thoughts on personal issues. And some were scribbles of my name in different fonts, with the abbreviation "Mrs." at the beginning.

I considered throwing away page, I recalled old lessons, and my inner voice reminded me of dreams.

Before the end of every year, weeks, hundreds of students in my old school will march and go up the stage to receive their hard-earned diplomas. I know that some of these students have been far away from home just to get a good education and will be going back home. Their belongings will be packed in boxes and will be shipped to the general delight of their youthful exploits. While our stories may seem so and make us yearn for simpler, happier times, I hope that what we will take out of those boxes and store forget are our dreams—for our country and for ourselves—and how we vowed to make them come true.

Michaela Jane Ross Corpuz, 21, finished Communication Arts at the University of the Philippines Los Baños in October last year and then went back home to Negros Occ. She's set to start law school in fulfill her childhood dream of fighting for the oppressed and the poor.

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They Said

Ignoring truth

"We pity Sec. Joseph Ebreo who... for sometime to work for the presidency and seemingly have forgotten or is deliberately ignoring the truth that the Constitution limits Attorney's single term to six." President.

—Bro. Eddie Villanueva, San Miguel Corporation's possibility of the proof President Lincoln wanting to a coup president's election

Magical fantasy

"Oh, it's immaterial. Just to come up with a product that's magical, a fantasy, a dream."

—How to Hire Architects on the difficulties of finding the right "design"

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Incredible mistake re Sally Bulatao

THAT IS ONE CASE THAT TRIGGERS ME TO TELL good pension planning is never in government to please don't. It has nothing to do with the income-any compensation. It is because despite the hard work you put in, you may end up tarred and feathered, with your name irreparably tarnished.

Sure, one could be rehired from an 65, positive positive any time and for any number of months. Secretary Cesar Purisima was rehired to be given over working papers and allowed of wrong-doing without due process to another term.

Something terrible has been done to Baltazar Bulatao Sr., chief of the National Tariff Authority (NTA) for almost 20 years. He was charged with doing-will be terrified and has done who moves with undue haste will be enlightened and realize that they have made a mistake.

Mr. Bulatao is 72 years of age and I can vouch for his good character. I can also say that he has been a great mover in the beer milk industry, which includes thousands of farmers, too, you may consult with the Philippine Carabao Center, the dairy farmers and the Milkfish Producers Cooperative Dairy Farmers and the Philippine Dairy Industry Association. Bulatao, passed on some of that farmers in milk to me, the succeeding graduate of the College of the Holy Spirit and with a master's degree in economics. Bulatao probably would have been somewhere more comfortable.

Recently, Sally is not the problem, but unsparing her reputation rests on issues he type, sound. Mrs. Bulatao, or was there malice in intent?

On May 2, Sally received a letter of dismissal with positive negative, consisting of a purported tax-free memo, office and hundreds of arithmetic computations. On May 4, a press conference was held, former nominated the dismissal of college officials. The same false notifications in the file.

President Macapagal-Arroyo also appointed her SEM administrator Dr. Jose Rizal Bulatao, who approved her walking papers, through its son Deputy Executive Secretary Adolfo Flores.

The charges against her were: (1) "Due to being a foreign consultant without the benefit of public bidding as required ... you are hereby re-

Human Face

Ma. Cinta P. Reyes

cleaning ... the next book and last option is," (2) "That you failed to observe the provisions of government procurement law. For you to call after memorandum of agreement with McCann Erickson Philippines for the advertisement and promotion of local milk, thereby giving a private party unwarranted benefits or preference in violation of RA No. 3019."

Sally said that in 2001, when she was new on the job and eager to get things done, she hired a three-piece expert, a Thai woman whom she knew had a degree in economics and was also a private practitioner. For this decision, she relied on the advice of agency old timers. This was needed because the lighting of some practices appointed to oversee the WTO and competitions. For 20 days' work, she was paid a reluctantly modest P50,000 net tax. The result was inflated power relationships and higher milk quality that resulted from the waiving of tax funds, improved piping system, upgraded production lines.

Two-fifth engineers and a dairy farmer were then sent to Thailand to study installation projects. These were generated savings for the government because instead profits for the dairy enterprises.

McCann Erickson Philippines was awarded for its consular services in 2002. In who all pro-bono, Ogie Alcasid's work was pro bono. What the MDA paid for was the production of press materials. There was nothing illegal in the award of the friendly cases. The entire package was presented to the NDA board, and the memorandum of agreement covering the transaction was reviewed and recommended for approval by the legal counsel of the Department of Agriculture and

then to the Commission on Audit in 2003.

When Sally joined the NDA in 2001, she was not a greenhorn to the dairy industry. In 1981, she joined the Philippine Dairy Council, an NGO promoting milk for health reasons. After her NGO presidency, she left to work at the PDC, also belonging to the Dairy Foundation of the Philippines with then Agriculture Secretary Carlos Dominguez as board chair. For long, long before all that, Sally had already gained the confidence of Dr. Jose Rizal Bulatao, then Federation of Free Farmers, being married to landowner and activist Lucky Bulatao meant being disenfranchised around the disadvantaged.

Sally has served under an agricultural secretaries. "I have done my part in making the industry be sound," she says. "This aims to government is already longer than I intended... Hence, the announcement of the Office of the President of my dismissal should not be construed as a political... as a presidential appointee, I serve at her pleasure. However, I must assert that I am not guilty and the positive measures implemented on the said projects are for the benefit of the dairy industry. I earnestly hope that the appropriate authorities will act judiciously so that the appropriate corrective steps will be taken. It is only proper to contract a mistake in the interest of recognizing productive and honest public service."

The 15th Congress of the Congress will be inviting Cebu City from May 10 to 26. Sally who was present in the past eight congresses will miss this event.

During the years of Sally (2001-2005), the growth in the dairy sector (number of dairy animals, productions, farmers involved, farmers' earnings) increased more than 30 percent. There are figures to support this.

When counterfeit breast prostheses fit, some Bulacan, there are Sally's tracks. Worried about the case, he was interviewed. "This is a mistake," he quipped.

Sally who had bravely stood up to his friend, Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, now Philippine ambassador to Laos, is in his heart broken interviews on this case.

To love, is to be the way to wear a good and honest public servant.

* * *

Send feedback to cmp@info.com.ph

A unicameralist on bicameralism

JOSE RIZAL ONCE WROTE, "WE MUST COME to our elders for advice. They have seen much and suffered much; they have lived and our knowledge gain hands their experience."

The late Jose E. Romero, a former congressman, Senate majority floor leader, delegate to the constitutional convention, sugar kingpin, secretary of education, banker and ambassador, wrote an autobiography entitled, "Fire To Long Ago." Every time I read it, I learn something new and I am inspired to do more for my country. Romero's memoir of his life is honest, and discusses that when we see today had no regular meetings, and this even in the Senate, where the rules of the game are set. Today's politicians want to bring us backwards, for words, sideways, with a mixed bag of changes that hark back to all the previous stages of our past. They have no creativity.

I've heard proposals to reduce the system of electing senators by district, the way senators were elected under the 1935 Law (1936-1941). The idea is, of course, a concession since what we have now is the at-large system of electing senators (the 12 top vote-getters win). The supposed to 1935, during the framing of the Constitution, but this time, the senators don't in the hoodwink into their joining the ranks of the unicameralists (one-house).

Roberto Oreb with the issue of unicameralism discussed in constitutional circles the role he played in the Constitutional Convention. He writes, "I was a member of the committee that drafted the provisions on system of legislature. There was general dissatisfaction with the system of electing senators from the then senatorial district. Provisions which had been in force since the framing of the Constitution of 1935 with its division of the country into senatorial districts, and there was underlying dissatisfaction of how they were being elected. Under the system in force, candidates were put up by political parties and the candidates with the most votes in the senatorial district were elected. Because of the multiplicity of candidates, the winning candidate usually obtained a plurality—not a majority—of the votes cast. Thus, it frequently happened that candidates with the most votes in the senatorial district were elected by a minority of the voters. Many of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention felt that this was unfair and undemocratic. They felt that the candidate who obtained the most votes in the senatorial district should be elected by a majority of the votes cast in the district. To achieve this result, they proposed the adoption of the single-member district system of electing senators."

The Long View

Manuel L. Quezon III

Romero dealt with the issue of minority representation in the constituencies when the role he played in the Constitutional Convention. He writes, "I was a member of the committee that drafted the provisions on system of legislature. There was general dissatisfaction with the system of electing senators from the then senatorial district. Provisions which had been in force since the framing of the Constitution of 1935 with its division of the country into senatorial districts, and there was underlying dissatisfaction of how they were being elected. Under the system in force, candidates were put up by political parties and the candidates with the most votes in the senatorial district were elected. Because of the multiplicity of candidates, the winning candidate usually obtained a plurality—not a majority—of the votes cast. Thus, it frequently happened that candidates with the most votes in the senatorial district were elected by a minority of the voters. Many of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention felt that this was unfair and undemocratic. They felt that the candidate who obtained the most votes in the senatorial district should be elected by a majority of the votes cast in the district. To achieve this result, they proposed the adoption of the single-member district system of electing senators by the

Romero's speech best reflecting upon as the house attempts to manipulate the senate back into the days of the pork.

Romero's words bear reflecting upon as the house attempts to manipulate the senate back into the days of the pork.

Give mining a second chance?

A RECENT SURVEY CONDUCTED by the Social Weather Stations revealed that a little more than half of the country believes that mining should be given a chance. (STAR, 4/28/06) Perhaps, the question should have been phrased "Does mining deserve a second chance?"

Yet another spell of national amnesia, or are we forgetting that we already gave mining a chance to employ and enrich the nation. And, for decades, mining companies were allowed to operate and extract resources – sometimes surreptitiously across the country, from the Cordilleras to Mindanao. After those long years of mining, which left vast many disasters, among them the Marcopper tragedy in Marinduque, the Filipinos are no richer for their troubles.

To this day abandoned mining sites dot the countryside, most of them conspicuous for their dead trees, polluted coastal waters, deforested forests and ghost communities. The original inhabitants of those sites found out too late that mining companies would rather import trained workers than equip local residents with the needed skills.

After being given the chance, mining impoverished the country even more. Marinduque is an irrefutable example of mining's ill effects. An island so woefully given to mining, it has only become poorer – and worse, poisoned. But despite the experience in Marinduque, the government yet again is entering a disastrous mining cult of riches and prosperity.

The lessons from the Marinduque experience seem to be lost on everyone in the Supa Rajo mine uphill in Albay. Instead of confronting the harsh truths unearthed by an independent commission created to investigate the spill, local officials are assuming its members of being anti-mining.

In its desperate, insatiable drive to rake in more and more money, the Arroyo administration has proposed amendments in the Constitution that would allow 100-percent foreign-owned companies to exploit the country's mineral resources and non-Filipinos to own real estate in the Philippines. And the government is diverting public attention from those administration by focusing the debate on the shift to the parliamentary system and on the conflict between the Senate and the executive branch.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines is right in stating mining per se is not bad, but it should not be allowed for the benefit of the few. It is being done in the country today – poorly maintained and regulated even as a given foreign investor gives advantage at the expense of Filipinos.

Mining may seem a shortcut but it blots it. Instead of the mining companies suffering for their mistakes, Filipinos are the ones being punished. The people need to be reminded of what mining has cost the country. They should not be fooled by empty promises of wealth.

—JAYBEE SARGARINO,
national coordinator,
Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRA),
DC, Salvador St., Loyola Heights, QC

'TV Patrol' vs '24 Oras': which news program is No. 1?

THIS REFERS TO THE ARTICLE titled, "In Mega Manila, it's still 24 Oras," written by Nhet Montealegre and Bayani San Diego Jr. (PDI, 5/7/06) We would like to clarify some points in the article.

Lady Diaz-Valdes reportedly claimed that "TV Patrol," on the average, led "24 Oras" by a margin of 2.5 points for the month of April in Metro Manila. Valdes, using the Metro Manila ratings of "TV Patrol" vs. "24 Oras" for the period April 19 to 21 (only), reportedly declared that "TV Patrol" led "24 Oras" for the entire month.

Based on data from AGB Nielsen, during the entire month of April, "TV Patrol" led "24 Oras" in Metro Manila just for five times and for each of those wins, "TV Patrol" led by less than one rating point. To claim that "TV Patrol" "won" the month on the whole is totally incorrect and irresponsible.

For the month of April, "24 Oras" registered an average of 25.6 points vs. "TV Patrol's" 23.4 points in Mega Manila, and posted an average of 23.5 points in "TV Patrol's" 22.3 points in Metro Manila, based on data from AGB Nielsen.

From May 2 to 4, "24 Oras" even increased its Mega Manila ratings as it beat its rival program by 11 points on average. Nielsen's overnight ratings data from AGB Nielsen Gist Slay 3, "24 Oras" led "TV Patrol" by almost 8 rating points.

Breaking down Mega Manila ratings, three Metro Manila and suburbs locations have been a common practice in the industry. GMA Marketing and Production president Manuel Quiogue said: They live chosen [sic] as the Metro Manila ratings because Mega Manila experiences are major studies and not a collection of many markets.

While our competitor claims they now have a higher overbilling rating, we stand by ratings that is proven that network picks up some and towards, particularly in times of significant events like the May 1 Labor Day coverage, the stand-off at the Manila hostage crisis last Sept. 26, the Feb. 24 declaration of a state of national emergency, the landslide in Southern Leyte and the recent class [sic] in the "Hello Garci" scandal, among last year.

Whatever the reasons behind Valdes's claims, we know that these false statements only mislead the public.

We believe that our continuous success in news and public affairs has always been due to our firm commitment to deliver accurate and responsible news and information without spin and agenda. It has never been part of our core values to make false statements to capture the attention of the viewing public.

—RUBEN T. JAQUIL, head,
Corporate Communications,
GMA Network Inc., Quezon City

LETTERS

DILG secretary shows failure of Catholic education

ON HINDSIGHT, I SEE HOW very inadequate and defective was the Catholic education we passed on to become secretary Ronaldo Puno. Maybe he should consider making up for the deficiency by following the examples of great personages in history like Thomas More, Irvin Javier and Jesus Peña.

As for President Macapagal-Arroyo, like many others, I would like to see her go... that is, step down from the presidency. That is the more practical way to resolve the questions about the legitimacy and morality of her leadership and to achieve national unity.

But quite apart from that, she should also look into and ask what she has achieved with her:

(a) Militaristic approach to our insurgency problem in Mindanao and elsewhere.

(b) Economic programs and policies. [Not being an economist, I cannot make an economist's judgment. I go by what my own eyes see every day—the rich become richer, the poor poorer—a human situation which the prophets and Jesus would cry out against.]

This is a message for the President and her interior secretary—a message that I would rather not make. But our times demand that we set aside protocol of feelings, and that we speak up and be counted.

—FR. CARLOS R. ARSARDO, S.J.,
Loyola House of Studies,
Ateneo de Manila University,
Katipunan Road,
Loyola Heights,
Quezon City 1108

Taiwan seeks to be a partner in world health programs

THE CHAIR OF HEALTH AND sanitation should know no boundaries and no helping hand should be excluded from disease prevention or disaster relief. This is a universally accepted principle.

One of the resolutions adopted by the World Medical Association (WMA) last year reiterated that the health and welfare of the people of Taiwan should no longer be excluded from the international community's pursuit of global health.

In a speech last year, WMA president Dr. Egon Ledapur stressed: If crises [in a transmitted from China to Taiwan, as happened with SARS, there will be no formal channels by which the World Health Organization and Taiwan can exchange technical data and assistance. Clearly as our real leaders, we need to be more vocal and active in ensuring that all necessary measures are adopted to involve all the peoples of the world in preparing for health disasters.

To live up to the expectations of our friends and to lived suggestions and demands, particularly in the area of epidemic prevention, Taiwan CDC is organizing a conference on "

EZ2 33 36 SUERTRES 3 5 4 FOUR DIGIT 1 5 4 6

Across the NATION

MEGALOTTO 6/45 5 11 23 33 41 44 P15,063,328.80

Priests condemn STL as front for 'jueteng,' 'archaic social evil'

LAOAG CITY—PRIESTS IN THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF Laoag have condemned the resurgence of "jueteng" in Ilocos Norte, which, they said, is being operated under the protective mantle of the government-run Small Town Lottery (STL).

The priests, through a pastoral letter read in all Catholic parishes in Ilocos Norte on May 7, said "since there was no valid argument for reviving this archaic social evil it now called STL."

It was the first occasion that the priests had publicly rebuked the STL ever as national franchisee had been approved by the operation.

"As we were contemplating on amending our old and evil ways during Lent, the government has come up with many schemes in amending the name and mechanics of an old and benighting evil. And as we were celebrating the resurrection of the Lord, the government shamelessly took the front pages, gladly announcing the resurgence of a social evil that we all thought has died forever," said the pastoral letter.

While there has been no application for STL franchises, the Ilocos Norte provincial board has started deliberating on a measure supporting the STL operations.

The board said the lottery would improve the revenues of local government units out of shares derived from it.

Ilocos Norte mayors are known to be supportive of the state-run gambling. However, not all mayors showed up during a public hearing (Sun Board) Monday as Bayan Muna convened to support the STL measure.

Reports reaching the provincial police showed that collectors have resumed soliciting jueteng bets in nearly all Ilocos Norte towns and the capitol city.

Supt. Isaac Lora, provincial police director, however, said "There has been no collection might be a non-run for the STL."

Laoag Mayor Michael Farinas, who had supported the entry of STL, said the bar collection must be stopped if it is intended for jueteng operations.

"STL or jueteng or both, we condemn it. We also condemn the reckless enthusiasm of the government in promoting the STL. We condemn the utter disregard, indifference and silence of our local authorities in allowing the obscene play of commanding the illegality of jueteng within the legitimacy of STL," the priests said.

The priests reminded authorities that they could stop illegal gambling if they want to, citing past instances when jueteng operations stopped.

In Pangasinan, police suspected that jueteng operators in the province were using the numbers game EZ-2, run by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, as a basis for illegal gambling.

Eleven collectors, supposedly soliciting bets for EZ-2, were arrested by the police on Tuesday in San Jacinto and Urbiztondo towns and Dagupan City. Cristina Avendaño and Rolando Sotelo, Agence France-Presse, Marvin Barcena, and Greg Bell section, PDI Covered Lauren Dedi

ROUNDUP

Wire thieves nabbed

SAN JOSE, Laguna—Police arrested on Saturday 10 suspects, most of them Metro Manila residents, for the theft of telephone wires owned by the Philippine Telegraph and Telephone Corporation (PT&T). Investigators said a PT&T lineman spotted the suspects cutting the wires at about 11 a.m. in Barangay Marcelo Green and immediately reported them to police. The suspects, who were kept overnight at the municipal hall, were identified as Richard T. Abino, Macedonio B. Malonzo, Ricardo B. Tongpacao Jr., all residents of Pandacaqui City; Worthy G. Dalmido and Peter P. Bautista of Tarlac City; Jonathan Mendoza of Bamban; Allan P. Bernal and Bryan P. Bautista of Tigbeng, Angeles City; Milan C. Manapsal, of Sambutan, Valenzuela City and Arnel S. Sumio of Dasmariñas City. Ramada Pasco, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Kasigma Festival

LIMAY, Bataan—Gov. Lito Villahermosa said everything is set for this year's Kasigma Festival, which will be held from May 27 to May 31 as the highlight of the province's 407th foundation day celebration. The Kasigma Festival was started in 1999 to highlight the celebration of Limay town fair's foundation day and also as a thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest for the year for the province's farmers and fisher folk. "We would like to extend this celebration for this year's Kasigma Festival, which we have taken to be the fastest festival in the world," said Villahermosa in a statement. "There will be variety and delicious food which the province is known for, cultural presentations and sporting events. We will also be showcasing our local products."

Anti-pilferage seminars

TABANGO, Leyte—The National Power Corporation conducted anti-pilferage seminars for its employees, especially those who work in the field such as linemen, line foremen, field officers and security personnel. A Transco power distribution said the company seeks to improve the knowledge and skills of the employees in enforcing the law against stealing or tampering with power meters. The seminars were held in Baggo, Canamucan Sur on April 19, Lico, Batangas on March 22, and Sabang, Quezon on March 23. Ramada Pasco, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

70 dogs rescued

CALAMBA, Laguna—Police rescued 70 injured dogs illegally held by Arnold F. Agustin, 35; Eli S. Medina, 38; Alan D. Gadang, 33, and Ram E. Medina, 29, all residents of Barangay San Rafael, Calamba City, Laguna. The dogs were found in six cages in an apartment on May 3 at the suspects' lair in Bliss De La Paz Resort, Bilibid. The suspects were detained at the Bilibid Municipal Jail for violation of Republic Act No. 8485 or the Animal Welfare Act of 1998 while the animals were turned over to San Agustin Veterinary Clinic. Ramada Pasco, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Missing girl in Pasig

PASIG, Laguna—Police said Mariel Pineda Reyes, 15, a Grade 9 pupil of Pasig Elementary School, has been missing since May 4. Reyes was missing since May 4. Her parents described her as suffering from mental disability, at 5 ft. 4 in. tall, with short straight hair, fair skin and medium-built. She was last seen wearing a blue T-shirt, short shorts and slippers. Police are requesting anyone who has any information about her to call the following mobile telephone nos.: 0405557-3888 or the Pasig Municipal Police Station. Ramada Pasco, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Missing employee

SAN JOSE, Laguna—Police have asked the district for a 29-year-old bank employee who has been missing since May 2 here. Raymond S. Arroyo, 29, a credit investigator of Rizal Microbank, Sarmiento of Municipal Subdivision, left the house at the time on May 2 but never returned. He, 5'6 at about 70 a.m. in his yellow motorcycle with license plate NO-2167. Any information on Arroyo, who was last seen wearing a yellow long-sleeve shirt, may be relayed to the SJa. D.o.c police or his family at 0920-9000-000 or 0905-436-0000. Ramada Pasco, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

PLAYING WITH DOVES
Six-year-old Judith and her older brother Joshua, 10, have fun chasing doves outside the San Pedro Cathedral in Davao City.

UP prof says no proof of heavy metal in Sorsogon

SORSOGON CITY—The head of the University of the Philippines-Manila (UP-Manila) Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology had assured Sorsogon officials that there is no scientific proof that heavy metals are present in the body of residents of five towns earlier subjected on a study by their group.

The assurance was relayed by Dr. Pedia Cortes-Maramba to Dr. Edgar Cuesta, Sorsogon provincial health officer, who called on her at her office in Bicutan the issue, following reports quoting the UP professor as saying that residents of five Sorsogon towns were positive of heavy metals.

Maramba told the Sorsogon official that she was misquoted by reporters as she had not given the impression that she was announcing to the world that she was commissioned to study.

Garcia said the UP professor's assurance would allay any fears that the report could generate, particularly a possible fish scare it might again create.

"We must be very careful about this issue as we don't want any repeat of the fish scare which would nearly cripple the livelihood of our already poor fishermen," he said.

Garcia was now in Manila by Governor Raul Lee to ask Maramba to be could clarify the issue. Bobby Q. Labadan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

GSIS stops loans to gov't men in Bulacan town

DAMBOANG, BULACAN—THE GOVernment Service Insurance System has suspended the loan privileges of local government employees here after the town failed to pay compulsory premium arrears to the state pension fund.

In a statement, GSIS president and general manager Winston Garcia said the employees would not be able to apply for loans until the arrears were settled or an arrangement for a settlement had been approved by the GSIS.

"We are open to settlements, but local officials have to come involved and binding agreements with the GSIS that they will settle their obligations," Garcia said.

According to the statement, GSIS acting vice president Mellahel Gutierrez said the suspension of loan privileges of Dambuang employees was made effective on April 11 after notices were sent to the town officials.

Mayor Dennis Marcos said a request for the delay in payment of GSIS premiums was the non-payment of rentals and taxes of big fishpond operators in the town.

Marcos said he was surprised when he learned about the suspension of GSIS loan privileges of local government employees because they did not receive any notice from the GSIS. Carmella Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

PNP building 'stronger' stations vs rebs

IMADEJAS CITY—THE HEADS OF SEVeral cracks of rebels or police stations in many parts of the country has prompted the Philippine National Police to speed up its modernization program by building "strong" stations.

Police Director Bernardo Rikon, chief of the PNP's Directorate for Comptrollership, announced that the PNP is building 250-police stations across the country, especially in areas threatened by insurgency.

"All police stations will be provided with their own buildings and will be adequately equipped with all necessary equipment such as short and long firearms, patrol cars, troop carriers as well as communication and investigation facilities," said Rikon, who was here Tuesday for the groundbreaking ceremony of a P10-million police headquarters at the city hall complex.

In Western Mindanao, a spokesperson of the National Democratic Front claimed that its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), had seven successful raids since last year, including the raids on the municipal police station of Sapang Dalaga town in Misamis Occidental.

Heroic on Monday unveiled the inauguration ceremony of a newly built P2-million municipal station in Hamilton T. Lim town in Zamboanga Sibugay and attended four other groundbreaking ceremonies in the towns of Bambanog-del Norte and Siburan.

"There's a project we aimed at making police stations stronger," Heroic said. Michael Punzalan, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Firm exec in trouble with Bataan gov, board

THE BATAAN PROVINCIAL board has declared a hypertonic executive troubled in the awarding P3.1-billion Subic-Clark-Subic Expressway project pursuant grant following his non-compliance with the directives of the provincial government.

In a statement, Gov. Enrique "Tet" Garcia said majority of the Bataan provincial board also urged the Bataan Economic Development Inc. (BEDI) to take steps in addressing the controversies surrounding the multibillion-peso road project.

The resolution declared Escalera Chaboyathi of Chaguda Corp., one of the Japanese consultants in charge of the Bataan segment of the project, for its refusal to comply with instructions of the provincial government leading to the collection of land taxes due to the province and other materials retrieved from several quarry sites in the province.

In a letter to BCDA, president Narciso S. Abaya, the Japanese executive denied the charges and said he and his firm are cooperating with the provincial government in order to resolve the issue soon.

Chaboyathi said in his letter that the impasse may result in the delay of the project that was envisioned to spur economic progress in several provinces in Northern and Central Luzon.

Local authorities said they expect pay the taxes due the provincial government.

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Florentino D. Suberviano

Pit bulls bred for fighting in Camarines Sur

Illegal dog trading uncovered in Albay

By Edgar Alejo and Jeh Bales
Legazpi City

ON MARCH 31, PO-lice and officials of the Animal Rights Foundation Inc. (ARFI) accosted a dog trader in a buy-bust operation in Tabaco City in Albay.

Senior insp. Nelson Llanera, chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) in the province, said Erasmo Arido, alias Erning "Ayam" (local name for dog), 42, of Purok 2, Barangay Bonot Bantay, Tabaco, was arrested at 7:20 a.m. at the old public market on Jose Leon Street, some 200 meters from City Hall and the police station.

Llanera said at least five dogs were ready to be slaughtered and a dead one was found in the possession of Arido.

The dogs were confiscated and brought to the city pound in Barangay San Roque for temporary shelter. They were later transferred to the ARFI rescue center in Lopez, Tayabas.

Greg Quimpo, an ARFI researcher, uncovered the dog trading activities when he posed as a buyer and ordered 50 dogs, one of which was already slaughtered.

Two days earlier, Quimpo left P1,000 as deposit to Arido and promised to pick up the animals early morning of March 31.

Charged

Arido was released after police investigators had found charges of violation of Republic Act No. 8485, or the Animal Welfare Act of 1998, if found guilty, he would face a penalty of P1,000 fine, plus

POLICE and animal rights advocates rescue these dogs after a buy-bust operation in Tabaco City last March 31. (CONTRIBUTED)

improvement of not more than six months, Llanera said.

ARFI president Charlie Weissberg, who was with the rescuing team, expressed concern over the animal welfare law which dog traders have ignored until now.

Weissberg said they were against the indiscriminate transport of dogs. At least 70 percent of dogs being transported die due to suffocation, he said.

"They (dogs) are not only being transported with and mouths but many so, placed on board the trucks with nerves iron framing that outwardly restrains their movements," Weissberg said.

40 operations

The ARFI, a charitable organization under the England-based International Wildlife Coalition Trust, is registered with the Animal Welfare Division of the Bureau of Animal Industry. It is engaged in the investigation of illegal dog trading in the country as it seeks to protect the animals from abuse and violence.

So far, it has discovered some 40 dog trading operations all over the country since it was established in 2001.

The CIDG operating team led by Llanera was also accompanied by ARFI rescuer Alan Whittaker, veterinarian Dr. Winston Emmanigas, and officer in charge Susan Llanera.

At the time of Arido's arrest, the city government was undertaking a massive dog vaccination in line with its anti-rabies campaign. The vaccination started in Barangay Sabacan.

By Jose Escandor Jr.
Camarines Sur

WITH A HUNDRED thousand pesos gambled on the table by an emerging group of pit bull breeders, two pit bulls fight like gladiators inside a plywood-lined arena inside a cockpit somewhere in Camarines Sur.

The rule is simple in this new type of game: The canine who gets maimed or is killed, or turns his back on a fight loses while the one that delivers the last attack on three wins.

The combatants are the new category of predators against their own kind, acquired through specialized breeding techniques that involve maintaining body weight and fighting form and adhering to a special diet, which some say includes steroid injections.

The killer instinct is harnessed in a controlled and supervised environment.

Typically people-friendly, pit bulls become wildly aggressive against each other in this kind of setup. Unlike fighting cocks armed with blades attached to their spurs to maim and kill, pit bulls use jaw power to lock the neck or throat of their opponents, pull the muscles or break their legs.

Realistic

Ostensibly, the dog fight is more "realistic" or "instinctual" than the traditional cockfight.

The pit bulls are presented one-on-one after the other. The dog with the lesser bet is pronounced first.

Fighting dogs must be bathed before combat, but they are not required to be present in the arena before the match. The handler is privileged to be in the arena and wait for his opponent after presentation.

Betting rules are the same as in a cockfight. Outside table betting starts as soon as the handler is brought in.

There are no fixed rules on fight duration, as long as the pit bulls are still fighting and neither one is running away the game continues until one dies or the handler owner decides to surrender.

A referee calls for a break after the successful delivery per-mission or stand-apart deadlock, like when both animals lock jaws on each other's holds without moving.

To continue the fight, the dogs are secured on their corners by the two handlers who are allowed to guide them while the fight progresses. The referee counts to 30 to allow the pit bull with the lower bet to make the first charge. Should the dog fail to draw a fighting stance and instead just submissively, the referee can declare his defeat.

Fight to death

The dogfight, which many condemn as bloody and inhumane, is a fight-to-death game that is gaining followers in Camarines Sur.

One or two exclusive home groups of breeders already exist in at least three provinces of Bicol and they have set up networks with regional and national groups of breeders.

Breeders from each in or pit bull hearts with pedigrees of fighters for at least P2,000 for a weaned puppy or they can spend P1,500 onwards for a male pit bull breeder to mate with a female breeder.

Maintenance and fight conditioning may even mean those for gamecocks.

Animal rights activists raise alarm

CIDG QUIMPO, AN ANIMAL rights activist, subscribed to an animal researcher at the Animal Kingdom Foundation Inc., said the dogfight is illegal.

Animal Kingdom is an advocacy group pushing for the enforcement of Republic Act No. 8485 or the Animal Welfare Act of 1998 that protects animals, specifically dogs, from cruelty.

The group has been working with government law enforcers or agencies in implementing the dog trade in Northern Luzon.

Quimpo was alarmed when told of the apparently secretive operation of the pit bull fight that involves big time gamblers.

Penalties

"The problem is, the law only provides six month imprisonment or payment of a minimum of P1,000 to a maximum of P10,000 penalty to those caught," he said.

Even if the gamblers are caught, they would easily be able to pay the penalty which is lower than their capital or winnings, he said.

Quimpo added that even as dogfight aficionados claim that the game is likened to boxing in relationship the use of raw power in the game, the dog has no option but to face death in the pit arena and that constitutes cruelty.

"Dogs should not be preserved and subsumed in torture. This constitutes a crime punishable by law," he said. — Jose Escandor Jr.

IN THE KNOW

Pit Bull

AMERICAN PIT Bull Terriers, Staffed Terriers Dogs, Pit Bull Terriers, or simply pit bulls (Canis familiaris), are medium-sized dogs known for their aggressive demeanor, strength and high pain tolerance. Originally bred for use in dogfights. They are short-coat-ed, were today as companion animals.

With an average life span of 12 years. They can reach a height of 18-21 inches and weight of 30-70 pounds at maturity. They are short, stocky built dogs with a power full square jaws and short, strong coats.

Pit bulls are a controversial dog breed because they can be extremely dangerous, especially when trained as guard or fighting dogs. Defenders of pit bulls have maintained that these dogs are no more dangerous than other large dog breeds, and that this unsympathetic bias is unreasonable.

However, the animals are generally not recommended as pets for novice dog owners.

In effect, and even public dogs, all bulls need exercise frequently. Early training is also a must.

Style: Pedigree, PBT Breeder's ch.

Philippine Economic Zone Authority

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF HEA FORMS
(2nd & 3rd Quarter 2006)

1. The PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY (PEZA), through its Corporate Budget for the CY 2006 intends to apply the sum of PHP 1,000,000.00 being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to participate under the contract for the Supply and Delivery of PEZA Health Examination Forms (HEA) for the 2nd and 3rd Quarter of 2006 and invites bids for the said supply.
2. The PEZA now invites accredited Suppliers from the Philippines to submit their bids.

PARTICULARS	QUANTITY (pads)
From Rm. 8101 - Import Permit	4,875
From Rm. 8106 - Export Duty	3,500
From Rm. 8102 - Application for Provisional Duty Exemption	
Canvas from the Customs Territory into the Zone	1,200
From Rm. 8108 - Application for Tax and/or Duty Exemption	
Capital Equipment Import	11,000
From Rm. 8110 - Application for Withdrawal Goods from Bonded Warehouse	
Raw Materials Import	1,500
From Rm. 8112 - Application for Transfer to Sub-Contractor	
Made Goods Within the Customs	1,500
Authority to Withdraw	4,750
Total Needs	5,125

Delivery of the HEA/FORMS is required within thirty (30) calendar days from the date receipt of the Notice to Proceed. The documents to be signed Bidders in connection to issuance of the Bidding Documents: NIL

3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures/ policy and procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act (R.A.) 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act" and is open to prospective bidders from the Philippines with pre-qualification, registration and submission of bids. Only those Philippine citizens/ entities with demonstrated capability and experience to undertake the contract and having the capacity to supply the requirements as specified in the Bidding Documents may participate in the bidding.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from PEZA and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Filipino citizens/entities upon payment of a non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents in the amount of Five Thousand Pesos (PhP 5,000.00). The complete documents may be acquired by interested bidders on the above date. The Bidding Documents shall be released personally to the prospective Bidders or their authorized representatives.
6. The PEZA will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on 15 June 2006 (Thu) at 10:00 a.m. (Venue: Second Floor PEZA Multipurpose Hall, Bonanza Boulevard corner Tiger Lane, Phase I, Cagayan de Oro City).
7. Bids must be duly accomplished and submitted to the address below on or before 10:00 a.m. of 22 June 2006. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security in the form of a Bid Bond issued by a surety or guarantee company duly certified by the Insurance Commission as authorized to issue such security; or cash, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit in the amount of not less than 2% of the ABC. Late bids shall not be accepted.
8. Bid opening shall be on 22 June 2006 at 10:00 a.m. at the 4th Floor Social Hall, PEZA Bldg., Bonanza Blvd. corner Tiger Lane, Phase I, Cagayan de Oro City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.
9. In case any of the above dates of acceptance or opening of bidding is not a regular day, the next working day.
10. The PEZA reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids, at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Philippine Economic Zone Authority
Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat
4F PEZA Building, Bonanza Boulevard corner San Luis St., Phase I,
Cagayan de Oro City
Tel. No. 855-1600 / Telefax No. 855-1601
e-mail: peza_cdo_bacsecretariat@yahoo.com website: www.peza.gov.ph

Ma. Cristina Cruz
Bids and Awards Committee

(Pub. May 11 & 18, 2006)

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

PURCHASE OF VARIOUS OFFICE SUPPLIES

(Pub. May 11 & 17, 2006)

Quake blacks out Central Visayas for 7 hours

From page A1

was recorded at magnitude 3 in Ormoc's city center and 4.2 in Barangay Tongonan nearby in operation.

Quake's epicenter

The quake was caused by a movement of a geological abnormality in the Philippine fault that is shuddered by Leyte island, Phivolcs said.

The institute said the earthquake was land-based, with no tsunami expected.

The fault was blamed for a massive landslide on Feb. 17 that buried the village of Guinsaugon in Southern Leyte, killing about 1,000 people. A 2.6-magnitude quake hit Southern Leyte just before the landslide.

'Ring of fire'

The Philippines is part of the Pacific "Ring of Fire," where earthquakes and volcanic activities are frequent.

The quake blacked out Cebu City, the country's No. 2 metropolis, Leyte and Samar islands, and also affected large areas of Cebu, Negros, Bohol and Panay islands.

Geothermal plants

The country's major geothermal plants in Leyte supply much of the energy to the six islands which are interconnected by submarine cable in the Visayas power grid.

The grid's main power suppliers are geothermal plants located in Barangay Tongonan which account for 45 percent of overall power consumption.

Officials said power was cut off as a safety precaution but was restored in some areas at around 1 p.m. Power returned to the rest of the region at about 6:30 p.m. yesterday.

Automatic shutdown

"For earthquakes with magnitude of 5.5 or higher, the [government] should shut down the plants as a precaution many months," said Glicy Kabanza, administrator of the Office of Civil Defense.

Service from one of the three power plants has been restored and power was expected to be back across the central islands before the end of Wednesday, Cruz said.

"Maybe some power lines moved, causing the power outage, but the earthquake was not powerful enough to cause damage," said Phivolcs's Bautista.

Powerful enough

But, according to Alberto Bengzon, the former head physicist engineer of Phivolcs, the quake was powerful enough to disturb the system, causing the tripping of a power generation plant of the California Energy Corp., an independent power producer, and Leyte geothermal power plant of National Power Corp.

The two plants located in Tongonan supply the power needs of the entire Visayas region. The CEC has a capacity of 125 megawatts while the Napocor plant has 330 megawatts.

Mount Apo, Napocor Visayas corporate staff spokesman, said they immediately after the power supply from Leyte was cut off, all the power generation plants operated by Napocor in Cebu, Negros, Panay and Bohol also automatically shut down.

Intensity 3 earthquakes are classified by Phivolcs as "weak." People can feel them indoors, particularly on the upper floors of a building.

'Moderately strong'

Intensity 4 earthquakes are classified as "moderately strong," and are felt by most people indoors and outdoors and can even rouse those who are asleep.

Nine other earthquakes hit Ormoc earlier this year, a 3.3-magnitude quake on March 22 and a 2.4-magnitude tremor on March 6.

The blackout disrupted work and commercial activities in many offices and business establishments across the Visayas, the rest of which has yet to be quantified.

Cebu offices close

In Metro Cebu, the blackout forced governments, including the courts, and many private offices to close at noon.

Traffic was disrupted with traffic lights out. Residents flocked to the malls, straining the city's generator-powered cinema which were operating with power generators.

Hotels and resorts suddenly experienced a surge in occupancy as residents tried to escape the heat. Reports from Blanche S. Rivera, Abigail L. Ile and J.J. Pacoste, Mario Montes and Joey Gabieta, Jhanmar Napallacan, Victor Lobro, Jose Arnaiz, Carla Gomez and Irene R. Gino-Cruz, PDI Visayas Bureau, with AP and AFP

CANDLE lights up home of a family in Cebu. Photo by Rappler Ramirez

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MAY 13	10:00am - 2:00pm	Requirements and Processes for Importing to Consolidators and Supermarkets	Update on the Rules and Regulations on Food Labeling (GL, EU, and Canada)
	2:30pm - 5:30pm		Waste Management and Technique for the Food Processing Sector
MAY 14	10:00am - 6:00pm	Business Opportunities for OFWs, Filipino Expatriates, and their Dependents: (USA, Middle East, and Japan)	
MAY 15	9:00am - 6:00pm	The Global Challenge of Food Safety and Regulatory Compliance: Market Access Strategy to China and Korea	

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The country's leading health and wellness show runs back-to-back with IFEX 2006 at the Philippine Trade Training Center.

SC chief fears rise of greedy legal eagles

From page A1

and secondarily only to their clients," Puno admonished.

"Worse, they have jumbled up the hierarchy of their responsibilities to mean their interests first, the interests of their clients second, and the temple of justice a far third."

Ethical compass

Panganiban stressed the need for all lawyers to soundly adhere to the Canons of Professional Responsibility.

He reminded them of the outcome of the latest bar exam, in which only four out of 10 lawyers passed.

"Keep their souls attuned to the demands of morality and honor, since a just cause cannot be promoted or defended by dishonorable means."

"Indeed, an ethical compass is required of those who seek to reach the pinnacle of this noble vocation," Panganiban said.

"Quality justice always begins with ethics. Without sound and firm ethical moorings to anchor the profession, attorneys are bound to drift in a miasma of professional uncertainty and even of personal degeneracy."

46 judges fired

Court records from 1999 to 2005 show that 28 lawyers had been disbarred for various offenses, 169 suspended, 92 reprimanded, 68 admonished, five censured and 18 warned.

During the same period, the high court also dismissed 46 judges from the service and suspended 41 others for various infractions.

In his speech, Panganiban praised Che Ian Cojuangco-Jaworski, 25-year-old Juancho Sinenseo of the University of the Philippines and niece of House Speaker Jose de Venecia.

"She [was] cheerily joined an elite society of achievers, [this] scholar ranks have some presidents, legislators, diplomats, magistrates and learned scholars of the law," he said.

PANGANIBAN: Ethical compass required

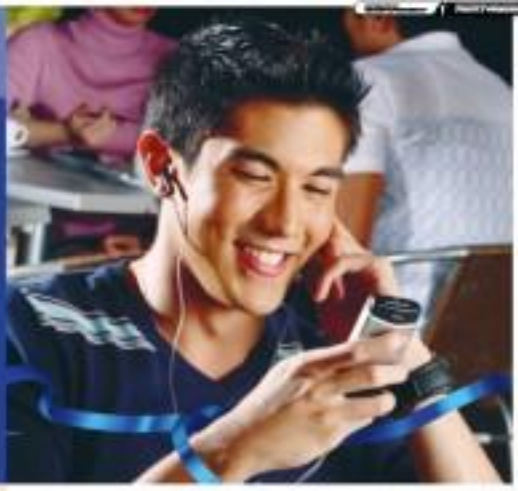
Personal lament

Panganiban said the new lawyers were luckier than he was since his parents died even before he could complete his law studies.

"Thus, I have no father or mother to congratulate me on my graduation, to cheer me on, or to keep my spirits high when I prepared for, took and passed the bar," he said.

Panganiban also lamented that none of his five children took after him and he was now pinning his hopes on his grandchildren to take up the legal professions, "some if they will not be a reprimander like Jose de Venecia."

"Gusto ko parang computer na ang cellphone ko."



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ECHIVERRI

Solon's wife loses car to thieves in Quezon City

By DJ Yap

THE WIFE OF MAGDALENA RIZALDECO ESPINO JR. became the latest carjacking victim in Quezon City when car thieves took her Nissan Patrol at gunpoint the other night.

Driver Ernest Herrera, 46, said he had parked the vehicle owned by Ofelia Ignacio Espino in front of Star drugstore along Visayas Avenue at 9:30 p.m. when he had gone to buy medicines.

When Herrera returned to the car, three armed men came by and ordered him to get out of the vehicle, according to PO2 Efren John Ramirez of the Quezon City police's station tapping unit.

One of the suspects then got on the driver's seat, while the others forced him into the back seat, Herrera told police. Ignacio Espino was not in the vehicle, a 2005 model with plate number XRJ-645, at the time of the incident, police said.

The suspects drove around for a few minutes before they let the driver out in Barangay Batasan where the suspects left him. Herrera said he could not remember the suspects' faces, as well as the make and type of their getaway firearms.

Herrera and Ebreo was asked to look at photos and artists' sketches of suspected car thieves, but he was unable to identify anyone in the lineup.

Unauthorized download to cell a crime

NBI raids 8 cell phone store branches for copyright infringement

NBI AGENTS raided a branch of Mellcom Telecom Supermarket Inc. in Quezon City yesterday for allegedly offering its customers download of MP3 songs and videos of known local and foreign artists.

By Margena C. Ortiz and Kenneth del Rosario

DOWNLOADING SONGS TO CELL PHONES without the permission of record companies is a crime.

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) issued this warning yesterday following a raid on eight branches of a store offering downloading services for a fee.

Simultaneous raids were conducted at Mellcom Telecom Supermarket Inc. branches in SM Southmall, SM Fairview, SM North EDSA, SM Manila, SM Pampanga, SM Cebu, SM Bicol and Glorietta Mall in Makati City, according to NBI Intellectual Property Rights Division (IPRD) chief Jose Isaac Sta.

Sta. said four major record companies, Sony BMG Music Entertainment Phils. Inc., EMI Phils. Inc., Warner Music Phils. Inc. and MCA Records Inc., had complained of copyright infringement by Mellcom.

"The record companies [said] they had billions of pesos in profits annually because of illegal downloading," Sta. said.

Lawyers of the record firms sought the help of the government's help in putting a stop to alleged unauthorized reproduction, downloading, and copying of MP3 songs and videos.

NBI IPRD senior agent Joel Tovera said the lawyers, posing as Mellcom customers, were offered MP3 and MP4 capable cell phones. Buying the units, the employees allegedly said, would entitle customers to "download privileges" for a fee of P20 per song or video.

NBI agents discovered that Mellcom also required customers to pay a monthly fee of P600 "to enjoy downloading privileges."

Tovera said, "The act of downloading songs from a computer into a cell phone without consent from owners constitutes copyright infringement." With 32 search warrants issued by Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 24 Judge Antonio Eugenio, the agents seized nine computers and several accessories from the store branches.

Tovera said the agents also got lots of songs available for downloading. "About 99 percent of all copyrighted songs belong to the four companies," Tovera said.

Tovera said Mellcom violated the Intellectual Property Code by offering to copy songs or music videos to mobile phones. But sales manager Elizabeth Dadela said the downloading was a "free service" to customers.

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Drive to Prosper

Police to tap school organizations in anticrime drive

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE POLICE WILL HAVE NEW PARTNERS IN fighting street crimes when schools open next month.

The National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) is seeking the assistance of different student organizations in high schools and colleges in preventing petty crimes committed against students.

Metro Manila Police chief Vidal Querol said the organizations would be provided with police volunteer identification cards containing numbers to call in report crimes.

Volunteers would also be encouraged to use their mobile phones to document such crimes as snatching, theft and robbery.

Meanwhile, policemen with spy cameras and television communication equipment would keep a watchful eye every day on the more than 300 public and private schools in Metro Manila when classes start in June, Querol said.

He said the use of cameras would help record evidence and aid policemen in arresting culprits.

"Our major concern is how to prevent students from falling prey to kidnapping syndicates," he told the reporters yesterday.

To prevent kidnapping, jaywalkers will be dispatched in schools from 7 a.m.

"Once students are ... in their classrooms, the policemen will shift their attention to kiosks and the marketplaces. Early in the afternoon, they will make the rounds of malls, where students are likely to hang out," he said.

Policemen would return to the schools before the end of classes in the afternoon, he said.

The NCRPO will meet with school security managers to synchronize security measures in schools with the police's crime prevention efforts.

"We ask all school administrators to include in their orientation of new students, especially those coming from the provinces, not only administrative matters but also safety tips," Querol said.

The Metro Manila police chief said victims of hold-up and cell phone thefts were mostly freshmen coming from the provinces.

Some 8,000 policemen would be deployed across the metropolis to ensure peaceful and orderly opening of classes, he added.

LAWYER Bonifacio Alonzaga shows copy of complaint filed by four contractors against Caloocan Mayor Enrico Echiverri and city treasurer Lourdes Jimo.

Caloocan mayor charged with graft

By Nelson S. Flores and Nancy C. Carvajal

GRAFT CHARGES WERE FILED YESTERDAY AGAINST Caloocan City Mayor Enrico Echiverri in the Office of the Ombudsman.

The case arose from the mayor's alleged attempt to collect money from an entrepreneur doing business with the city government.

In his four-page complaint, Isidro Rivera told Echiverri violated Section 3 of Republic Act 3019 (the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act) by demanding a "30 percent" share in the more than P9.2 million the city government owed him for services rendered.

Echiverri denied the charges. Rivera's contract was reportedly with the administration of former Mayor Rey Malonzo.

Three other service companies that had contracts with the former city administration also claimed Caloocan was withholding payments due them.

Tiger Construction is trying to collect P1.3 million, Atlantic Investors, P2.8 million; and Speed Investment and Services, P2.4 million.

Rivera said his Sup-Sup Trucking Services had been distributing water to several water shortage Caloocan barangays since 2002. He said his contract with the city government was extended until the month of June 2006.

Rivera added "however... February (and) May 2004, he complied with his obligations and made the appropriate water deliveries to the city and its constituents. The deliveries were acknowledged, certified and approved for payment."

However, Rivera claimed Echiverri "feloniously and criminally refused to pay" for his services. "Worse, Echiverri demanded 30 percent of my collectibles before payment could be made," Rivera alleged.

He noted that other firms that were similarly situated had already paid.

"I refused to comply with his immoral and felonious demand because I already lost substantial amount of my investments due to the long and unreasonable delay of the said payment," Rivera said. Included in Rivera's complaint was city treasurer Lourdes Jimo.

In a statement, Echiverri said the accusations were unfounded. "I never asked money from them and had never met them," he said. The mayor added that the payments for Tiger Construction worth P13.9 million; Atlantic Investors, P2.8 million and Speed, P2.4 million, were still under review by the city treasurer's office.

"We have to examine the validity of their contracts before I could approve their payments," he said.

"It's taxpayers money," he added. "I could not just authorize the payment without first verifying the contract which could be disadvantageous to the city government."

Echiverri did not say when the account review would end, but said it was "a smear campaign by my political rivals who, in early as today, are already gearing for the 2007 elections."

Elderly couple dead in Parañaque fire

By Jocelyn R. Uy

AN ELDERLY COUPLE DIED AFTER A TWO-hour fire razed their house in a posh subdivision in Parañaque City early yesterday morning. Firefighters in Manila were also kept busy as four fires broke out in different areas of the city within the hour.

Fire investigators in Parañaque identified the fatalities as Mario Suarez and his wife, Chit, both said to be in their 70s, according to fire officials.

The couple tried to escape their burning house on Don Bosco Bernardino Street, Governor Garcia Avenue in BF Homes Phase III, but failed to do so because of the steel grills banning their windows, said Insp. Rodrigo Corpuz, chief of the City Fire Intelligence and Investigation Unit.

Fire investigators have yet to determine the cause of the fire that reached the second alarm before it was put out at 6:10 a.m. Supt. Leonardo Nieva, city fire marshal, pegged the damage at P1 million.

In Manila, seven investigators said the first fire broke out at 12:53 a.m. on Carlton Street, Pasa, in Manila where 100 houses were burned to the ground. Fires while the first fire was going on, another five hit U. Tanon and U. Trinidad St., Sampaloc at 12 noon, at around the same time, another fire started at San Nicolas and Dasmariñas Streets, Binondo.

Fire trucks were on their way back to the stations after the Sampaloc and Binondo fires were declared under control before 2 p.m. when another fire alarm sounded.

The fourth fire on Roman Soler Street, Binondo began at 2:39 p.m. Firefighters declared a fire out at 4:39 p.m. Rick Mollé Almanzor

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Aklan
Municipality of ALAPADA

INVITATION TO BIDS

CONSTRUCTION OF DEEP AND POTABLE WATER SYSTEM LEVEL III

Sealed Bids of the Municipality of Alapada through its Municipal Bids and Awards Committee invites interested and qualified Bidders to submit their sealed bids for the Construction of Deep and Potable Water System Level III.

The Municipality of Alapada, Province invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for the Construction of Deep and Potable Water System Level III which is more particularly described in the Bidding Documents, Plans and Specifications and Other Contract Requirements. Sealed Bids/proposals shall be received by the Municipal Bids and Awards Committee (MBAC) Secretariat, Municipal Hall, Alapada, Province on or before 10:00 a.m. of May 30, 2006 at which time and place all bids received will be opened and publicly read in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend. Late bids shall not be accepted.

Bidding documents in the Bidding Documents should be submitted by each of the Contractual Documents for the Project may be purchased from the Municipal Bids and Awards Committee (MBAC) Secretariat upon payment of a non-refundable fee for Bids and Awards Committee (MBAC) Secretariat upon payment of a non-refundable fee for Bidding Documents in the amount of Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00). It may also be downloaded free of charge from the website of the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System (PhilGEPS) provided that Bidders shall pay the non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents not later than the submission of their bids.

The Municipality of Alapada reserves the right to reject any and all bids, declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract without any liability to any affected bidder or bidders.

For further information, please refer to:

MBAC Secretariat
Municipal Hall, Alapada, Aklan
Telefax No. (036) 288-3331

(SGD.)
ATTY. ROMEO A. ALMARIO III
MBAC Chairman

So, what's wrong with being a Red in one's youth?

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

PARTYLIST REP. SATUR Ocampo's reminder to President Chief of Staff Michael Defensor that he just is an indirect confirmation that Ocampo has not yet renounced armed struggle against the government.

He may be a parliamentarian but Ocampo, who represents the leftist Bayan Muna party, still believes in the violent overthrow of the government.

Ocampo was reacting to Defensor's offer of legal help for him and the rest of the "Senate 7" congressmen on conditions that they renounce the armed struggle being waged by the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed unit, the New People's Army (NPA).

The Bayan Muna representative said in Defensor: "Remember your roots."

It was an apparent reference to Defensor's membership in the subversive group Kabataang Makabayan when he was in college.

It was a raw surprise.

Many leaders in government were attacked as communists in their college days.

Among them was Rigoberto Tiglao, former chief of staff and now ambassador to Greece.

Another former top government official who was an out-and-out communist in his youth was Robert Torres, former Interior undersecretary and executive director of the administration of President Ramos. Torres was a member of the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP).

So, what's wrong with embracing communism in one's youth? Communism's utopian ideals appeal to the youth.

* * *

Youthful idealism is replaced by practical considerations.

Communism's advocacy of armed struggle as a way of changing the system loses its appeal as the youth becomes a responsible, peace-loving adult.

There's another way to change the system and that is to fight it on its own turf—through peaceful means.

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
DR. JOSE FABELLA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
Manila

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Dr. Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital invites interested bidders for the bidding of:

Foodstuffs	PHP 1,174,024.00

Bid documents and eligibility requirements may be secured at the BAC Secretariat, Administrative Office. For inquiries, contact tel. nos. 735-71-44.

Schedule of Activities:

Pre-bid Conference	May 16, 2006	Reception Hall, 2:00 pm
Bid Opening	May 30, 2006	Anesthesia Office, 2:00 pm

The CUPMH reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason; subsequently negotiated formally and award the contract to any bidder whose proposal as evaluated is the most advantageous to the government.

The CUPMH/BAC assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expenses or losses that may be incurred in the preparation of bids nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

(Sgd.) ELISEA G. MARQUEZ M.D.
Vice-Chair, Bids and Awards Committee

MetroBriefs

Padlocked boarhouses

SEVEN boarhouses were closed down in Muntinlupa City for violating city ordinance compromising 200 meter proximity rule which prohibits those establishments from operating near schools, churches, hospitals, police stations and government offices. Cary Llamas, chief of the Business Permits and Licensing Office (BPLO), said three more violators may become members of Barangay Putatan were also padlocked for violating the "no table" policy which bans owners from entertaining their customers. The BPLO said recently met with 20 club owners in the city to remind them about the other provisions of the ordinance such as the ban on staging lewd shows and the use of skimpy attire outside the club to entice prospective customers. JULIEN R. UY

Free funeral service

ANTICAS (public school teachers can now enjoy free burial services. A memorandum of agreement signed by Luisa Dulo Inte-Ismail, Bona Biberal III Services and Chapel, the Department of Education and Deandre Sindy Sino Gino provides free memorial rights to teachers in the Inter-Lumbia schools. Those interested in taking advantage of the benefit can get in touch with the office of Deandre Gino Gino at tel. no. 351-8822 ex. 20 or 306 the Bona Memorial Services in-

Lions Club International, "We distribute the cellfix service to teachers, whom we consider our second parents," said Mayor Toby Tiangco.

Vesak Day

ABBREVIATIONS and members of the diplomatic community of countries which observe the birth of Buddha on said ceremonial rite. This month the three major stages or the life of the Buddha, (1) the day he was born, (2) the day he passed away, with a photo exhibit and a free multimedia movie tribute to the Buddha, (3) the day he gained enlightenment, said Dr. the day he passed away, with a photo exhibit and a free multimedia movie tribute to the Buddha. The highlight of the celebration the Vesak Festival Celebration on Friday, May 19 sponsored by the Embassy of the Republic of Malaysia in the Philippines.

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Transportation and Communications
MARITIME INDUSTRY AUTHORITY

ORDER

Name of Ship	Particulars of Vessel to be Chartered	
	Gross Tonnage	Net Tonnage

US won't reply to Iran president's letter

WASHINGTON—THE UNITED STATES said Tuesday it would make no formal response to a surprise letter sent by Iran's hardline leader, but President George W. Bush vowed to pursue diplomatic efforts to resume Iran's nuclear program.

As Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad arrived in Indonesia, during which he could ask Jakarta to mediate in the nuclear row, Tehran said it was waiting for a reply to the US page letter to Bush.

But the White House insisted there would be no response on top of comments already made by secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who said it remained "nothing new" that offered hope of resolving the nuclear dispute.

Although a New York meeting Tuesday of foreign ministers from the world's six major powers failed to agree on how to tackle Tehran, Rice said: "The international community is united that there must be a strong message to Iran through the Security Council that their behavior is unacceptable." International oil prices edged up again following the US rejection of the letter.

Iran has refused to meet international demands to end its uranium enrichment work, which Washington and its allies believe hides a nuclear weapons drive. Tehran insists its research is for peaceful purposes.

The United States, Britain and France want a resolution under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, which would probably start with a warning to Iran that could be followed up with economic sanctions and even military action.

But China and Russia have spoken out strongly against coercive measures, with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov reaffirming the divide on Tuesday.

"Our position is very firm. We think that at this stage there is no necessity to discuss Chapter 7," Lavrov was quoted as saying by Russia's Interfax news agency.

Permanent Foreign Ministry Frank Wisner, Ambassador, who was at the New York meeting, said the process of agreeing a UN resolution on Iran could take up to two more weeks.

Bush said that even China and Russia agreed that Iran must not be allowed to have a bomb, but that he was determined to seek a negotiated settlement rather than launching more coercive measures.

"The first option and the most important option is diplomacy," he said during an appearance in Florida when asked about the Iran dispute by reporters of the public.

The letter from Ahmadinejad was the first from an Iranian leader to a US president in more than a quarter century, and called for "new ways" to settle long-running tensions that have reached a new peak over the nuclear dispute.

Tehran promised the letter as an important diplomatic initiative, but US officials dismissed the document as more philosophical treatise than political overture.

In the letter, Ahmadinejad assailed the United States over Iraq, its reaction to the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, the handling of "war on terror" detainees and overall US policy in Latin America.

He suggested that the two countries return to religious principles as a means of restoring confidence. "Will you not accept this invitation?" asked Ahmadinejad in the letter.

"There is nothing in this letter that in any way addresses any of the issues really that are on the table in the international community," Rice said.

AFP

BPI FAMILY SAVINGS BANK CONFERRED TWO PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS

BPI Family Savings Bank Conferred Two Prestigious Awards

BPI Family Savings Bank was recently awarded by the Home Guaranty Corporation (HGC) with two awards: Longest Partner in Home Financing (Third Bank Category) and Biggest Volume of Outstanding Guaranteed Housing Loans (Thrift Bank Category).

Receiving the awards in behalf of BPI Family Savings Bank is SVP-CLO Gumercindo Cano. The awards were presented by Vice President Hedi B. Cano.

BPI Family Savings Bank is the leader in housing loans because we have helped build more homes for more Filipinos than any other bank.

With our **low interest rates**, **wide branch network**, **fast turn-around time** and **expertise in consumer financing**, BPI Family Savings Bank is the bank you can trust to build your dream house today!

And for your peace of mind, we even have a **FIXED interest rate of 11.5% for 6 to 12 years**.

Why even consider any other bank?

For more information call 845-6888, 754-6369, 754-6917; log on to www.bpisupersaver.com or visit any BPI or BPI Family Savings Bank branch or Express Banking Center near you.

Build your Dream HOUSING LOAN

BPI FAMILY SAVINGS BANK

The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Ilarde

Temporary aid plan for Palestinians up

UNITED NATIONS—THE MIDDLE EAST QUARTET on Tuesday endorsed the creation of a temporary mechanism to deliver badly needed assistance to the Palestinian people suffering under a cutoff of Western aid to their militant government.

The proposal, unveiled after a day of talks among top diplomats of the United States, European Union, United Nations and Russia, was aimed at creating a conduit of services to the Palestinian territories.

It also reflected a careful effort to navigate between a US drive to put a squeeze on the radical movement Hamas, which came to power six weeks ago, and a desire to take care of the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people.

EU external relations commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner said details of the proposal would hopefully be finalized not in the coming weeks, but signs of difference already emerged between the Europeans and Americans.

A statement issued said the European Union would begin discussions on developing a "temporary international mechanism" in the coming weeks for the more than three million people in the Palestinian territories.

It said the quartet would back a body "that is limited in scope and duration, operates with full transparency and accountability and ensures direct delivery of any assistance to the Palestinian people," is called on donors and international organizations to consider taking part and pressed Israel to take steps to improve the humanitarian situation of the Palestinians.

But the quartet also reiterated that the Palestinian government must fulfill its responsibilities regarding "basic human needs, including health services, as well as proper fiscal management and provision of services." The international community is still trying to respond to the needs of the Palestinian people," US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told a joint news conference.

"But ultimately the resolution to this is a Palestinian government that accepts its responsibility for governing," she said.

The United States and EU have frozen aid to Hamas, which they consider a terrorist organization, until it renounces its armed struggle against Israel and recognizes the Jewish state's right to exist.

But with 160,000 Palestinian government workers depending for their salaries and fears mounting of growing chaos and potential violence in the territories, pressure grew for a new outlet for assistance.

The quartet expressed "serious concern about deteriorating conditions, particularly in Gaza" and called on the international community to respond urgently to assistance requests.

"Everybody understands that something must be done," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters during an earlier break in the meeting.

But a senior European official said the hope was that the temporary mechanism would be used, among other things, to pay the salaries of the Palestinian civil servants.

The official, who asked not to be named, said the body could also be used to disburse the $55 million a month in customs duties and taxes collected by Israel on behalf of the Palestinians but withheld since Hamas came to power.

A senior US official said neither country was enthusiastic but, noting that Germany was paying Palestinian doctors and teachers would be one thing and dispatching it to pay Hamas police would be another.

AFP

Iraq PM says unity gov't close

BAGHDAD—IRAQI'S PRIME minister-designate said on Tuesday he was close to forming a government that would end five months of stalemate marked by a bomb in civil war.

But under negotiations said there was much hard bargaining left before Nuri al-Maliki could present to parliament the core of national unity coalition he and Iraq's US backers hope can drag the nation back from the brink of sectarian conflict.

A suicide car bomber killed 17 people and wounded 35 at a restaurant in the northern city of Tal Afar, recently held up by President George W. Bush as an example of progress being made in freeing Iraqi Sunni evidence by al-Qaida and other guerrillas.

It was one of the worst attacks of recent weeks and came after the US military published what it said was new evidence of desperation among Sunni rebels, in the form of a purported captured al-Qaida document detailing their setbacks in Baghdad.

Maliki, a Shiite Islamist whose nomination ended months of factional deadlock, has another four days to present a cabinet but told a news conference he might do it "today or tomorrow." "We have achieved much and there is little left to do," he told a news conference where he impressed observers with a hard style that worried few guests. "We have done 90 percent." The apparent breakthrough, following heavy pressure from the United States, comes after rival Shiite, Kurdish and Sunni groups agreed to fill the executive cabinet posts of interior and defense with figures free of ties with militias, Maliki said.

Sunni leaders—and, less vocally, the United States—are demanding the removal of the gunmen interior ministers, accused of condoning Shiite death squads in the police. But there was still no agreement on who should take his place, officials said.

Among other posts still undecided, Maliki said, were oil, trade and transport—key to rebuilding the crippled economy. Reuters

BOY PHARAOH
Workers put the nearly life-size painted wooden model of Tutankhamun into place for the upcoming exhibit at Chicago's Field Museum, "Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs," Tuesday, May 9. The object was discovered with the tomb of the boy king. AP

WORLDBRIEFS

Nepal king's ordinances scrapped

KATHMANDU—Nepal's new government on accepting some ordinances imposed by King Gyanendra earlier but seized direct power last year, but there are complications in sitting with the bottom lines, a senior official said Wednesday. The Cabinet decided Tuesday to invalidate several laws enacted after Feb. 1, 2005, when the king dismissed the government and his move was seen under his leadership. However, the government has not dropped an earlier order to release under which several banned people were charged and jailed, suspended of being communist rebels or leaving links to them. AP

Ex-commie may become Italy's president

ROME—Italy's incoming government is set to elect the country's first former communist president on Wednesday in the face of opposition from friend of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's center-right bloc. Prime minister-in-waiting Romano Prodi has vowed to vote through his candidate, Giorgio Napolitano, after two days of wrangling and inconclusive ballots. Although the vote to elect for Prodi to show his leftist coalition can govern with the unruffled majority in post-war Italy. Reuters

German cannibal gets life sentence

FRANKFURT—A self-confessed German cannibal was jailed for life on Tuesday after a court found him guilty of murder for killing and partly eating an allegedly willing victim he had met on the Internet. At a trial, the court in Frankfurt found that Armin Meiwes, known as the "Cannibal of Rotenburg," slaughtered a man to satisfy his dark sexual urges. Judge Klaus Corinth ordered Meiwes, who stood off the victim's penis while he was still conscious so they could eat it together, as "psychologically ill" but said he was responsible for his actions. AP

Notorious abusers Cuba, China elected to new human rights council

UNITED NATIONS—THE UN General Assembly elected Cuba, China and Saudi Arabia to the new Human Rights Council on Tuesday, putting notorious abusers on a panel created to replace its discredited predecessor.

US Ambassador John Bolton derided the inclusion of Cuba to the council and said it proved that Washington's concerns about the new panel, which it voted against, were justified.

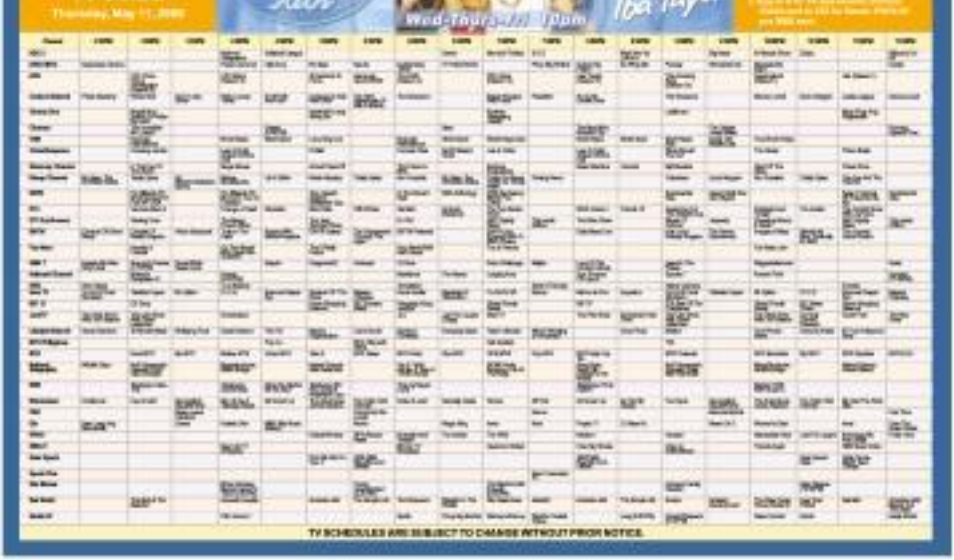
"When a big 'Unless-stall' eventually of the council's election. "That simply says that the deficiencies from the previous commission may well now still be carried over, as originally predicted when we voted against this resolution." The United States long criticized the previous commission, saying it was ineffective and loaded with abusers such as China, Cuba, Sudan and Zimbabwe.

The US was among four countries that voted in March against the revamped council, on the grounds that it would be too easy to human rights violators to be elected.

Cuba, for its part, hailed its election to the Human Rights Council as a "resounding victory" for the anti-interventionist and a "defeat" for the United States.

"The United States failed in its goal of preventing Cuba from getting a seat in the most important panel specialized in human rights in the United Nations," Cuba's foreign ministry said in a statement.

The 191-member General Assembly, voting by secret ballot, also elected Russia and Tunisia to the new 47-member council, adding two other countries whose records have been criticized by rights groups. Countries needed at least 96 votes to secure a seat. AFP



JANET BERMAS Right on target

SPORTS
Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres

Laguna archer bags 4 golds

By Marc Anthony Reyes

NAGA CITY—SECOND ARCHER Janet De Leon Bermas of Calamba won gold all four golds she had set her eyes on since as a fisherman's son from Capiz and Visayas sank one more record in track and field yesterday halfway through the Palarong Pambansa at the Metro Naga Sports Complex.

Accomplishing what her older brothers failed to do, the 14-year-old Bermas ruled the girls' standard round, 50-meter, 30-meter and the Olympic round to become the most bemedalled athlete thus far in the week-long competition among more than 6,000 public school students.

An incoming senior at the Pedding National High School, Bermas trained for the Palaro in a wind-swept basketball court of her school in Calamba, Laguna. Her siblings, all archers, failed to compete in the Palaro when the meet was swapped in 2001 and 2004.

"We trained in strong winds," said Bermas in Filipino. "Today's wind is almost similar to the conditions we have back home."

Meanwhile, Grand Mayor Jorge Pinatacsaang emerged the hurdles king after re-writing the secondary boys' 400m hurdles record with a time of 53.7 seconds.

Second placer Rengie Abing of the Northeast Capital Region and third placer Joemale Hamada of Ilocs Region also bettered the old 57.1 mark of Madon Arke of Western Visayas set in 2005 in Iloilo City. Abing clocked 55.0 seconds and Hamada 56.7.

The 17-year-old Pinatacsaang, who comes from the coastal town of Bayawan, Negros Oriental, was beating by more than 10 meters when he

LAGUNA A-24

Larios fight Pacquiao gift to Filipinos

FILIPINO RING ICON MANNY PACQUIAO yesterday said his coming bout against Oliver LARIOS on July 2 in the streets Calibraran is a gift to his countless fans.

"Fighting Larios is my gift to my countrymen for the devotion and support they have given me and my family during my boxing career," said Pacquiao from his hometown in General Santos.

Pacquiao will flyto California on Saturday to train at the Wild Card gym in Hollywood.

Now financially secured, Pacquiao said money takes a backseat against Larios.

"I am not fighting anybody for money. I am returning a favor to you all," said Pacquiao.

Pacquiao's gift to the Filipino fight is to be handled by his own outfit, MP Obaras Pacquiao Promotions, by collaboration with ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.

Called the Manny Pacquiao vs Oliver showdown, the fight is being handled as a boxing event fought by Filipinos, promoted by a Filipino and broadcast by Filipinos in an affirmation of the Filipino' world-class supremacy.

"Filipinos can watch the match live when ever they may be in the world," said an ABS-CBN spokesperson, who added the bout would be seen through The Filipino Channel (TFC), Hillcrossed, Direct TV and the network's Mexican broadcast partner.

After 11 years of fighting which included blockbuster bouts against Erik Morales and Marco Antonio Barrera, Pacquiao is undoubtedly the country's richest sportsman.

Davao, MPL enter semis

SAN CARLOS CITY—MUNTINLUPA PAMANA-qui Lac Pilion, donning another scoring performance from striker Clarence de los Reyes, thrashed Cagayan de Oro Liberation Oriental, 4-1, yesterday and joined Davao in the semifinals of the PFF National Under-17 Club Football Championships at the ARD fields here.

A day after lifting MPL to a 2-1 win over Rizal with her second-half strike, De los Reyes scored two brilliant goals that thwarted the Cagayan boosters, who were looking forward to another upset after stunning Negros Occidental, 3-0, Tuesday.

De los Reyes broke the ice in the 5th minute with a free shot just inside the box after losing two defenders with her scintillating run from the left flank.

She struck anew in the 21st minute, getting a silky feed from 20 yards out and rolling the ball to the right of the goal to seal the second victory that gave MPL the top spot in Group C of this tournament, supported by Red Ribbon, Petron and 2Go and Sports Plus Channel of Solar Sports.

With De los Reyes getting in a bigger threat, attacking midfielder Jessica Ilyne was given more room to operate and she was rewarded with an 8th minute goal from long range, before Isabel Molabola got into the scoring fray four minutes later.

Earlier, Davao pounced on Cebu's shaky defense to score early with a 2-0 victory that saw the Cebuanos blame two penalty kicks that would have swayed the momentum to their side.

The victory vaulted the top spot in Group A for the Davaoenos, who are finally playing true to form after their opening day draw against Rizal.

Group B on Sunday Iloilo and Negros Oriental, which battled to a 2-2 smooth Sunday, are playing opposite ends at press time.

Fifty-nine Salgado right-footed rocket from the edge of the penalty box in the eighth minute pushed Davao ahead, just two minutes after Cebu skipper Gabi Mercado sent her spot kick wide-off the post.

GMA/PJP Sports

SPORTSWATCH

JVC badminton listing ends today

THE FOUR-LEG JVC-VITA HOSPITAL BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIPS WILL GO to Bacolod tied overall with a huge field slashing for four honors in various divisions at the Pelaway Badminton Center in Bacolod City. Hundreds of players have signed up for the event slated Friday, 10:30 with a lot more expected to beat the deadline for registration today. Tests are pegged at P500 for single-entry event and P1,50 for three playing in two or three events. For details, call 034-4330620/0917-8003955 (Manila), 0917-8008901 (Cebu), 0917-5078859 (Bacolod).

Pablis snares bronze in Turkey

LIGHT FLYWEIGHT ALBERT PABLA EARNED HONOR FOR THE LOSE FILIPINOS medalist in the 42-nation Konrad Lorenzer Cup 450 International Boxing Tournament which ended Saturday in Istanbul, Turkey. A native of Bacolod City, Pablis lost to Ukrainian George Ungurian in the semifinals, 26-12, and settled for the bronze medal. The Ukranian medal effort topped the fourth of the Philippine campaign that saw nine boys of Light Flyweight Cecilio Dela Cruz, Lightweight Mildred Barbosa and Anthony Bacaltos fired in their respective bids for at least the bronze medals as they lost in the quarterfinals.

AAP Auto Show tomorrow at PICC

MORE EDITIONS OF ITS 75TH ANNIVERSARY THE AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION of the Philippines stages its first ever drive-thrubar as "Mall Auto Show" tomorrow until Sunday, at the Forum, PICC, CCP Complex, Roxas City. Automotive titles/brands 1 Automobile (PIA), the world-governing body for motorsports, is sending its car-racing queen Pinky Roxas to grace the ceremonial ribbon-cutting of Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza and LTO chief Jose Arnaldo Lantion are the guest speakers. The AAP mall also launch the coffee table book "Fast Lane" and hold a photo exhibition.

127 fights up in Salpukan derby

ALL SIGNS LEAD TO BRIGHT COLISEUM TODAY AS THE "HERO" SUCCESS-fol Summer Salpukan 8-week derby resumes at 3 p.m. with 127 fights on tap. Sponsor is 8-Mig Derby Inc. Seeing action are 84 participants with two points and 21 others with 1.5 points. Participants with 2.5 and 3.5 points challenge one another for the 8th-in Derby. The hotel guaranteed prize is P4 K with P1,000 (P8 million), two-bound new Toyota cars and four condominiums). A Toyota Elite will be given to the fastest win-then-joiner while a Toyota Vios is reserved to the one-of-a-kind rare champion. For details, call 896-7646 and 896-8471.

CHESS OFFICIALS National Chess Federation of the Philippines president Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay is flanked by Region III coordinator James Gerrao Infante (left) and Allan Cline, Mindanao chair for the countryside, after their formal appointment in the NCFP ceremony.

Religon 5-cocker stakes P1.2M

THE KUYA MEGA COCKPIT'S KINABUKASAN 5-COCK DERBY SLATED ON MAY 16, June 1 and 2 stakes a gaffpot prize of P1.5 million. A three-days' figure awaits the fattest cock champion. Promoter Rodel Religon is expecting the top 4 cocks of the second eliminator bet, P1,400. The champion handler and gaffer gets P100,000 and P60,000, respectively. Meanwhile, Religon's new cockfight format, the Cocktail Affair, from One Cock Derby Handicap requires two losses. Promoter Roger del Rosario said a bonus of P1,000 awaits the fastest one champion.

Ailing Giants stop Express

By Hussny R. Castillo

A WALKING WOUNDED PERIMETER SIDE SELLED TO A FIFTH straight win at the expense of 98-91 last night, downing the Express the chance to start a new era as possible semi-while tackling closer forward on outright semifinal seat in the Cross Member-PBA Philippine Cup.

The Citadow Giants hailed themselves out nasty wipes at cross-bitten in the fourth quarter and arrest an orgasm at 93-86 mercy in wire-to-wire ogle, but see after losing a key figure in the offensive column for some of an injury at the moment-Collantes.

"I refuse to look at injured players and have that excuse to lose," coach Ryan Gregorio said. "We're down to eight men, but all of them breathing but I told the players that it's still 5-on-5-on the court at any given time."

Ato Gregorio let a layup handy a minute-at-the floor in the first quarter and had to be helped out because of a severe right ankle sprain. He is now listed as doubtful (along with Eugene Tejada [ankle], Ney Castillo [calf] and Jordan Sobrido), who is out for the rest of the season with an ACL tear.

Just in, Pumaloski is enjoying his hottest scoring streak in the games under his quote with starting power forward Marc Pingris nursing a bruised shoulder and relief point guard Enal Ilejay playing with a sad back.

Asi Taulava is also hampered by a bruised left knee but still managed to score 16 points and grab 10 boards in the 98-91 victory over Talk 'N Text as part of schedulemore rule player deal among three teams on Monday night.

But instead of just rolling over and dying with their early hapit-mater outside threat game, the Express made hand and gave the Giants a scare, though it was not enough to mark a new beginning for the struggling franchise.

In the second game, Jun Magsol whipped Sta. Lucia, 98-87, behind the 29 points of Lucio Seigle, who made 13 of 15 shots from the floor and nine of 10 from the strike.

The Red-hot Sta. Lucia-bound Chris Alexander's sun in 13 games while the Realtors chipped to 3-9.

Tim scores

PUREFOODS 98 — J. Ing (1) Hayes-46-35, Pumaloski 16-9, Hay 12-5-0-0-0-0, Yap 0-0-0-0-0-0, Ilejay 0-0-0-0-0-0, Castillo 0-0-0-0-0-0, Sobrido

SSC rips FEU in V-League

SAN SEBASTIAN, ORANDO: strength from import Jawawee Braden, dumped the Emforce U, 25-23, 30-28, 25-20, to notch its season for a semifinal berth in the V-League presented by Shakey's as the blue eagle gym tonight.

Braden, the Thai guest player of the reigning NCAA champion, came through with 30 hits and assisted up with BSC teammate Jaruwee Sua Lampoy in dominating their rivals, especially in the third set to complete the sweep.

The victory was the Lady Stags' second straight, enabling them to defend back into contention after dropping their first three games. But with a 2-3 card, the Bandolerians' spikers needed to win their last two games in the elims to gain at least a tie for the last semis berth.

Besides the Stanes, the five teams after the single round elims will advance to the semis of this event presented by Shakey's Pizza and organized by Sports Vision.

La Salle will playing with Philippine Christian U in preseding duties the way with a 4-0 slate while Adamson and FEU share second place with 3-1 cards.

FEU, which assumed second-side substitute Adamson last Sunday, dropped to 3-2.

Lampoy powered in in crucial finish, up to Braden, breaking in 16 hits and winding up with 11 points for the Lady Stags.

Mavs rout Spurs, tie playoff series

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS—JOSH Howard had 27 points and nine rebounds and Dirk Nowitzki added 21 for fourth-seeded Dallas who stormed to a 113-91 win over San Antonio that evened the quarter-final series at one game apiece.

After going in to the patient pace of the top-seeded Spurs at Sunday's 87-85 loss in the opener, Mavericks coach Avery Johnson inserted the speedy guard Devin Harris in the lineup, replacing outgoing Adrian Griffin for Sunday's game.

"We wanted to have the tempo and play at our pace," Harris said. "In game one we played at their pace."

The move was a masterstroke as Harris helped ignite Jason Terry and accelerated the offense in a new gear the Spurs could not match. Harris scored 20 points on seven of 12 shooting.

Another beneficiary was Howard, who clearly had some extra leap in his step. He did all of his damage in the first three quarters, making seven of 17 shots and 11 of 13 free throws.

Jerry Stackhouse also was a factor with 19 points off the bench for Dallas, which improved to 4-1 on the road in the postseason and returns home for games Three and Four on Saturday and Monday.

The Mavericks sped to a 7-1 lead that had Spurs coach Gregg Popovich downing a frustrated load.

A jumper and two driving slambacks by Howard and a 3-pointer by Stackhouse built the lead to 23-14.

In Sacramento, California, Rick Adelman was fired by the Sacramento Kings on Tuesday despite leading the club to eight consecutive appearances in the National Basketball Association playoffs as the most successful coach in franchise history.

Geoff Petrie, the Kings' president of basketball operations, gave only murky reasons for the decision, which probably was caused by clashing egos and the empire-building ways of owners Joe and Gavin Maloof, who are understood to be behind Adelman's departure. AP, AFP

DALLAS' Josh Howard bangs across the basket after a dunk.

WALLACE

JAMES

Pistons go 2-and-0 vs Cavs

DETROIT, MICHIGAN—RASHEED Wallace scored 20 points to lead a balanced attack as Detroit downed visiting Cleveland with a 97-91 victory that opened a 2-0 lead in their quarterfinal series.

As they did in game one, the top-seeded Pistons used a strong start, sharp shooting from the out and a consistent defensive effort on opponent LeBron James on Tuesday to improve to 6-1 in the postseason. Game three is Saturday in Cleveland.

"Right now we've got to be a little greedy," Pistons center Ben Wallace said. "We've got to go into Cleveland looking to close this thing out. We've got them on the ropes."

Detroit maintained control despite just one very timely basket from Richard Hamilton in the fourth quarter.

Leading the way was Wallace, who had a quiet 10 points in the opener but came alive Tuesday. Looking for his 6th times, he made 10-of-17 shots, including 5-of-8 3-pointers. AP

Nadal trips 'Phantom of Miami'

ROME—RAFAEL NADAL CLEARED A HOLDER relation he in his pursuits of Guillermo Vilas' Open era-record 53-match-winning streak on clay.

Nadal beat 2004 champion and tourist Carlos Moya, 6-1, 2-6, 6-2, in the first round of the Rome Masters on Tuesday for his 46th successive win on clay. He'll match Vilas' Open record on the Rome title, and in Spain begins a record of 14 others as an winner.

Nadal acknowledged Moya presented "the worst first round" opponent possible.

"When you practice every day with one person, you know exactly [his style]. And he is one of the best players in the world on clay," said 19-year-old Nadal. "What I lost the second set I saw the player out of Miami."

Moya beat Nadal in three sets in the first round in his Masters in Madrid.

A large Foro Italico crowd with high expectations of the clash between the two world-greats began to groan after Nadal won the first set and pushed up where Moya found added.

Nadal broke for 2-1, and eased two break points at 4-2 to finally end Moya's resistance, and lead four break at final 5-2.

"That was a very important moment in the game," Nadal said. AP

Spain aims for World Cup glory

MADRID, SPAIN—ANCELO TOSINA- nament, another disappointment?

Spain makes its eighth straight appearance in that World Cup with hopes of success unachievable by time.

A soccer giant at club level, the national team has lifted only one major trophy—the 1964 European Championship.

Spain has played in 11 total matches overall, but has only won 19 out of 42 games.

The latest coach charged with helping Spain to live up to its potential is 47-year-old Luis Aragones, who is underway in 10 matches since replacing Inaki Saez after the country's flop at Euro 2004.

Aragones says he believes Spain can reach the last four, although it could face last-time champion Brazil in the quarterfinals—the second's stumbling block in two of the last three tournaments.

"It's my professional ambition and I try to transmit to the players that we have to achieve it, that we're going to achieve it. Then this time the result will be sealed. Then we're going to get past the quarterfinals," Aragones said recently.

The coach said the team has to be able to improve uncomfortable moments, likely Madrid Cup-winning team has struggled on its way to the title, he said.

"To win, you have to know how to suffer," Aragones said. AP

Government Warning:

Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.

Sparks seek solo lead vs Tortillos

By Jasmine W. Payo

THE FORMER PURIFIER DIVISION are now feared.

From stalwarts in the last two conferences, the Taguig Orcs Ayuda now might own the third ball. Besides real ferocious rallies that have boosted them on top of the PBL Unity Cup.

And this network-centric coach Robert Sison (the Century Cesar Tortillos handle Toyota Otis at 4 p.m. today at the Ultimate Sports Gym in Parañaque.

"They're the comeback team," said Sison. "We just have to be ready, we're expecting a physical game."

Coach Louie Alas, though, has worries of his own within his Sparks' roster for the solo lead against the resurgent Tortillos.

"We have to maintain that character, offensive or defensive, that we are in versatile," said Alas.

Two teams who are in deeper trouble, the Toyota Otis and the Hapee-PEU Toothmasters, duels at 2 p.m.

With only three games left in the eliminations, Otis and the Toothmasters need a win to create their quarterfinal bids.

The Lay-Gee Steelmen at the end of the double round robin still were outright semifinal berths, while the bottom-placers will be eliminated.

Gaining a big lift from its second stringers, Toyota Otis stunned defending champion Sun-at-Home, 67-61, last Thursday.

Edmundo Cherlin, who averaged a mere 2.7 points in previous games, shot 12 markers including key baskets in the final minutes.

Grenny Goose also got a boost from its bench, with Mike Delgado leading with 10 points as part of his 19 triumph over the Montalla Jewels last Tuesday.

JOE DIVINAGA (right) will carry the load for Toyota. PHILIPPINE STAR/RUY L. MARTINEZ

Taguig cagers trim Valencia

Laguna archer bags 4 golds

From page A-29

barely cleared a JumEr in the final 15M runners that paved the way for the event finish.

He said he would still compete in his pet 400 hurdles today.

The Rural Telephone of PCE of

Garduce eyes top in 2 to 3 weeks

By Jasmine W. Payo

RP hosts fencing tilt

ALVAREZ: Good show in his first attempt.

Asian Open: Alvarez 2nd

Pecante rips powerlift mark

ENTERTAINMENT

'We will not be swayed!'

MTRCB chair reacts to anti-porn group's complaint

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

"WHAT ELSE IS NEW?"

Initially, Marilyn Laguardia, chair of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB), seemed unperturbed by the tempest of controversies stirred by the Hollywood movie "The Da Vinci Code."

Laguardia seemed serious, however, with regard to the complaint filed by the Philippine Alliance Against Pornography Inc. against the MTRCB.

The anti-pornography group sought the help of the Commission on Human Rights, claiming that the MTRCB had "committed rampant grave abuse of authority."

In a phone interview with Inquirer Entertainment, Laguardia explained the board's position: "The Alliance Against Pornography is free to seek the assistance of any agency it wants to approach."

When it came to "The Da Vinci Code," however, the MTRCB would remain unperturbed, said Laguardia. "Whatever decision the MTRCB arrives at with regard to the classification of 'The Da Vinci Code,' we will remain firm. We will not be swayed by any group."

Interim Representative ob. viously's copy of the anti-pornography group's complaint, which alleged that the MTRCB chief illegally signed the license permit to import an "anti-Christ" film [and] illegally approved its trailer."

"It's legal," Laguardia said. "I signed it so that the distributor [Columbia Pictures, Sony Pictures Releasing International] can submit official cut lying in a copy of the film to the censors and submit it to the board for review. How can we determine whether the film is indeed 'blasphemous or defamatory' if we don't preview it first? We have to see the film first before we can pass judgment."

She said she's very familiar with the legal points raised by the anti-pornography group "because those are found in the MTRCB's implementing rules and regulations."

If the anti-pornography alliance could have its way, "the Philippines would be the first country in the world that would banned the film," Laguardia pointed out.

"According to research, 'The Da Vinci Code' has received a PG-13 in the United States, G in China and PG-12 in Korea," Laguardia said. "I've been closely monitoring the issue. I've noticed that if there are groups that are strongly against the film, there are also groups that are passionately in favor of it."

Still, she remained adamant: "We cannot allow all these facts, opinions and controversies to affect our final decision."

As the time of the interview, Laguardia noted, "Columbia hasn't scheduled a screening with the MTRCB yet. Knowing the film's May 18 playdate, the distributors should submit it for review within a week."

Director aims for an Emmy with NY soap

By Nini Valera

DIRECTOR LOUIE IGNACIO IS AIMING FOR an Emmy for his latest soap, "I Live New York," which was shot on location in the Big Apple.

Ignacio, 39, told the business on Monday that Filipinos could compete in the global market for soaps and telenovelas, and "I Live New York," his comeback series to be aired over GMA 7 starting May 15, would prove this.

Using three state-of-the-art cameras that delivered 24 frames per second, Ignacio captured the depth and texture of film while working on a digital format. He described his product as a mixture of the essence of the New York lifestyle and its sophistication and the sensibility of mass melodrama, which have become a staple in local primetime viewing.

"So we could win an Emmy for this," he insisted. "We can do it."

While he handled the three cameras used for the shoot, and won his own video equipment, he had to rely on a New York labor force for most of the grunt work, owing to the strict union laws that rule the city that never sleeps.

Life in New York, as everybody knows, is fast-paced, and Ignacio discovered that he could keep up with the speed of light. Now Forbes, he said, likes to start early and frivolously.

"I could be a New Yorker myself," he said. He told his stars that they had to work like New Yorkers and should never come late to the set. The stars also had to memorize their lines before they reported for work.

Shooting was a breeze, even if the actors rehearsed for as long as 12 hours a day and he had to pay the New York crew stiff union rates for overtime work.

The stars—Jolina Magdangal, Marvin Agustin, Jennylyn Mercado and Mark Anthony—worked like pros. "Movies was a problem," Ignacio said.

Eighteen episodes for the soap's beginning used exciting views filmed in New York against a backdrop of the usual tourist spots, like the Rockefeller Center, the Chrysler Building, the Brooklyn Bridge,

DIRECTOR, A2.3

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2 SLITHER	6 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3
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4 APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR	7 POSEIDON

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2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	6 THE WILD
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4 WHEN A STRANGER CALLS	8 SILENT HILL

NOVALICHES

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	5 MURDER

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2 POSEIDON	2 POSEIDON
3 APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR	3 SILENT HILL
4 SUBMERGED	4 APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR

IMUS | STARMILLS

1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3
2 POSEIDON	2 APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
3 APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR	3 SILENT HILL
4 SUBMERGED	4 SUBMERGED
	5 POSEIDON
	6 POSEIDON

BACOLOD | ILOILO

1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3
2 POSEIDON	2 POSEIDON
3 SLITHER	3 SLITHER
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A2

Director aims for an Emmy with NY soap

from page A1-1

Central Park, Times Square, the Statue of Liberty, among other destinations.

But Ignacio declined that these sites were just the background for the story of four people whose lives had intertwined in New York.

"The story runs its course," he said. "I was afraid that this soap might turn into a travelogue; it did not. New York was simply the setting and the story sets off the main event, and no one can say that we just went on a tour of New York and filmed the tourist attractions."

With New York still on his mind, Ignacio changed some settings for scenes that were shot here. For example, Mark, who plays the character of a poor boy in search of his mother in America, the location had originally been a squatters area in Metro Manila.

"But that would have shown us to be in such a desperate state. So I changed the location of Mark's home and brought it to the province," Ignacio related.

In shooting the rural scenes, Ignacio was inspired by memories of farmers in Australia who used rakes and flails to dejunk an idyllic life, which he described as so PI-like.

The Filipino in Ignacio also triggered a bout of homesickness for the director. Before the 22 days allotted for the shoot were up, Ignacio had wanted to go home.

"My heart is in the Philippines," he declared. "I don't want to leave it for long."

But he conceded that it was easy for him to fall in love with New York.

Ignacio also fell in love with his cast.

"I've seen Adina and Marvin as a love team in the other movies," he said. "In this soap, I witnessed first hand the magic in their tandem. They're still a love team despite the changes in their lives. No one could miss that special chemistry between them."

"This is a first in local television," said Wilma Galvente, GMA 7 senior vice president for entertainment.

DID YOU KNOW...

THE LOUVRE allowed "The Da Vinci Code" cameras to film inside the museum, but the Westminster Abbey scenes were filmed elsewhere in the United Kingdom after church officials declined permission.

We haven't heard the last of Paris Bennett

PARIS PARIS BENNETT WAS VOTED OUT of "American Idol" last Thursday the singing lit lost its youngest finalist and last remaining African-American performer.

He went especially sad to see Paris go because, to us, she was the show's greatest and most creative contender.

At only 17, she "dared" to compete with much older and experienced contestant, some of whom were more than 15 years her senior.

We also like the way that Paris, the girl's "teen chameleon," would reflect her singing style and look to make her song each week.

Now that she's out of "Idol" is this the end of the road for Paris Bennett?

Absolutely.

There's a huge teen music market out there, and with anyone packaging and marketing, Paris could be this year's top new recording artist.

So, it's likely that we haven't heard the last of young McAllen, not by a long shot.

Meanwhile, back at "Idol" leading frontrunner Final Four Katharine McPhee, Chris Daughtry, Elliott Yamin and Taylor Hicks are making a final, go-for-broke push to see who will be crowned the 2006 competition's Top Three.

Last year's Carrie Underwood, Bo Bice and Constantine Maroulis, four of those and the show are, pardon the cliché, history, so the same thing could happen to this year's top nine.

Any bets? Our prediction is that Elliott will turn out to be the wild-card contestant today as Chris, Katharine and Taylor will sing it out in the "final-flash."

On the other hand, there are fans of the show who believe that it'll be an all-male lineup for the competition's last stretch.

The next year, however, we believe that there are enough eleventh-out there who believe that Katharine's unique combination of talent, looks and stellar charisma is too good to pass up, and therefore deserves their enthusiastic support, despite her less-than-glowing reviews from the

WE HAVEN'T HEARD

Nestor U. Torre

VIEWFINDER

POSTNOT BY BILL AHINEZ

A LITPA BY JESS ABRERA

MARTIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG

PUGAD BABOY BY PAL JUNIOR

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT

HUTTS BY PATRICK MCDONNELL

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PANALAYA

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're creative and talented. You can send a movie, the theater and the army. Others sometimes think you're eccentric. (You live larger than life.) People often underestimate your flair for originality. In your 30s, you begin to reach summits for life. Your curiosity is occasional. After age 60, you're attracted to the notion of retirement. Lucky August-born actress Helen Hayes shared.

BIRTHDAY OF Natalie Portman, actress. Holly Hunter, actress. Jose Jos' Martha Graham, choreographer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You may come out with money. Think twice before you shop or spend your hard-earned cash. You're definitely tempted to go overboard. Fortunately, you might be overdue at the beginning money be well!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): It's a good thing that you're a practical, sensible type. Is disagreement with your new and close friends, don't give away the farm. Don't make promises you can't keep.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Don't let heavy Jupiter repress your halo. Mercury 1 is, so be it! It feels like everything is hurry-ups and just fine. Perhaps it is. Make sure you're not in denial about something.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You will enjoy time with others, especially groups, today. Someone has valuable information you can use. Be careful about who you volunteer for or agree to. (Do you want to take on more than you can chew today?

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Don't push yourself a bit of leeway when setting deadlines with myself and authority figures. Don't make it hard on yourself in your attempt to impress someone.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You don't have to reveal your plans or anything to do with your career. Keeping another media—which becomes things and no one else seem. You're thinking logically!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Don't overcompensate with for something by being overly generous. Your night be in-clined to do that today. Alternatively, you might want to rush. (Stupid thoughts, naughty.)

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Power struggles have to vanish an agreement with others today. (Do you get pressure from the Sun and the Moon. Don't overextend yourself. Be realistic.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Things are a bit explosive at work today. People are going overboard about something. Don't get involved. Stay on the bandwagon. Keep your mind about you.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You're ready to take on the world. Don't allow a wonderful party mood to get you in trouble. Happy tensions will please you now.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Be careful where you, that or to express a new wisdom level. Use pressure! Risk is big or he or new things will appear this way.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You have to have a positive frame of mind today. You're thinking like a winner! This optimism attracts people to you.

DAILY CROSSWORD

By Jack P. Dennison
Washington Branch, CA

HIRAKISHOSHES BY JOHNIE TEJIDO

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON

KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA

LOVEHOTS BY ELIZABETH CHONG LI

TULBOK BY RAFLAND "BEYUH" MUHAMMAD

We haven't heard the last of Paris Bennett

From page A2

show's judges of late.

In addition, Starbuster is the last remaining woman in the finals, and the show's female contestants deserve to be represented in the idol's last stretch because they have figured so strongly in the competition.

In fact, when the final 12 were first revealed, the girls generally trounced the guys on both name and looks.

It was only during the subsequent rounds that the males finalists' individualistic performances stoke material making a genuine impact on viewers, genitally upstaging the female hers' more predictable performances.

So, Starbuster should "represent" the ladies as long as she can.

Of course, the show's viewers have had the last word on the matter.

If more than 46 million votes were cast last week, even more could come in now as the Final Four's respective millions of fans support whatever the way-out.

Vilma's excellent performance

Last Thursday we caught the first half of the "Maalaala Mo Kaya" drama in which Vilma Santos played the mother of a physically and mentally challenged girl.

Doctors warned her that her child faced a grim and seriously retarded future, but Vilma's mother character refused to give up on her. True enough, her daughter was able to overcome some of her limitations, as the drama made her to spring viewing.

Even better, Vilma's nine spoke showed why she is regarded as one of our finest actresses. Her portrayal was forward, restrained, insightful and versatile—a potential winner in this year's TV acting awards in droves.

Rodjo Dimoc, who played Vilma's husband, also turned in an excellent performance, as he delivered his most enthusiastic kudos so far. Lastly, director Olivia Lamasan's handling of the drama was admirably restrained and felt.

The major fly in the show's ointment was its slow pace progression and pacing, perhaps because it's a two-part production (the second half will be telecast tonight).

If the drama had been condensed hit week, it would probably have come off better. So, why the two-part format? Could Vilma's hefty talent fee have had something to do with it?

Blockbuster trailers

Trailers of potential blockbuster movies "Superman Returns" and "The Lake House" are luring viewers in droves, screening the big action-adventure production, "Poseidon," which opened last May 10. "The Lake House" stars Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock, while Brendan Brazil's plan On Plan of Steel in "Superman Returns."

Anka's way

Outside singer-composer Paul Anka does it his way excitedly at the Araneta Coliseum on May 31, performing hit tunes that have remained popular for decades.

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Onstage
We haven't opened our theaters, stage plays and corporate events to now accepting bookings for June to July 2006
For bookings, pls. call Loren at 751-3963 or Glen at 755-3865.

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IPIX
G1: 1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 | 2 POSEIDON | 3 REINCARNATION | 4 POSEIDON
G4: 1 POSEIDON | 2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 | 3 POSEIDON | 4 SENTINEL | 5 AQUABARRE | 6 POSEIDON | 7 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3
GB1: 1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 | 2 POSEIDON
GB3: 1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 | 2 POSEIDON | 3 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 | 4 POSEIDON | 5 POSEIDON
ATC: 1 POSEIDON | 2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 | 3 POSEIDON | 4 AQUABARRE | 5 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3
ACC: 1 POSEIDON | 2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 | 3 POSEIDON | 4 SUBMERGED
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Mother's Day letter from Amalia Fuentes

IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE SUNDAY, AND NOT a day goes by that I don't think of my mom. I really miss her and Mother's Day only serves to highlight that.

For those of you who are fortunate enough to still have your mother around, make an effort to reach out to them instead of the other way around. Mothers shouldn't have to bend over backwards to be close to their children. They've taken and then some.

With that in mind, I am sharing with you the letter of Tita Nena (a.k.a. Amalia Fuentes) last reaction to one of my columns.

Stomach-lurching words is a mother's sub heart. I love (and like a cancer) don't want her to have the same regrets as I do – because I left words unsaid and things undone when my mom was still around.

Dolly Ann Carvajal

I'm sure she knows I mean well by printing her mom's letter. I hope that her love for her mom will prevail, even just to make Tita Nena happy on Mother's Day.

Sometimes, we don't have to play or give to, we just have to give way.

Dearest Dolly Ann,

Thanks for your kind thoughts about me that came out in your Philippine Daily Inquirer columns. I am happy that you have come into your own as one of the more credible class biz writers in your widely read column.

But more than that, I am glad that you have acknowledged in a column item, that you actually miss your mom's presence, "in a way that you never thought you would." Your mom is now one of my dearest friends. I am sure wherever she is, she will be very happy reading this gesture of appreciation of her role in your life.

And to say, my daughter Liezl, who is your good friend, has now given me the same appreciation and honor. Yi to for this reason that I am writing to you to explain further the points I am stating about Liezl and Albert.

I have decided to break my silence once again, on this Albert and Liezl issues. But this has been going on since their "honeymoon" (as not all their lovers words in this was message to you.) but it is actually them, Albert and Liezl, who have, since time "immemorial" consistently and consistently been bringing up their hard life in the US in their interviews. I am speaking again if only to let the public know the truth about this supposedly "fairytale romance" of Albert and Liezl.

They always mention that they went through a lot of hardships when they eloped. By continuously repeating this statement, they are actually putting me in a bad light because it gives the impression that I allowed my only daughter to go through the "hardships" that they so seem to enjoy talking about.

Liezl eloped when she was 16 and I did not finish school. Albert was an illegal alien in the US with no permanent job.

So what did they expect when they eloped? It is true that they went through hardships. It is also probable true that they had to sleep on the floor on that time. But these things were experienced by Liezl only during the three-month period of their elopement.

This sad experience of Albert and Liezl in terms of their hardships in the early stage of their marriage should actually be a lesson to everyone on the importance of preparedness. If they are not financially prepared to do so, his well-meaning parent would want their children to marry young especially when they have not finished school and are ill prepared economy.

Liezl, in the 16 years that I took care of her, has lived a comfortable life. I have provided her a good education, the comfort of a home, and whatever else a child needed for a happy life.

When she finally married to me after three months, I accepted her and Albert into my home (which she rejected).

They lived with me in my house in San Francisco and they did not have to pay me a single cent while they were staying with me. And up to now, I have, in no instance, denied them my help whenever they come to me for assistance. So it really pains me, that I am put in a bad light whenever they tell their story.

My warmest regards to you and all the best to you always.

Love,

Tita Nena

Boracay boo-boo

TRIVIA TIME: hopeful turned sexy actress Katrina Halili made a boo-boo during a brief event in Boracay. Imagine, she asked the audience to vote for her via text through Globe and has for their "Most Sexy Star" contest. The people from Smart were floored! How can we blame our relative or was she trying to be funny? Now could it have slipped? Katrina said that those three who recommendation companies are seriously competitors? I'm sure AMAZE will invite smarter guests on hand for Katrina in their next affair.

Brent's side

BRENT Javier's manager Sheryl Reyes texted me to clarify the item I wrote about Brent and SM.

According to her text: "Brent was hired in June 2005 for a three-month campaign of SM's Stephen shop. It was an oral [hand] only. Brent's first born Jesse of 2005 and I had a written contract that it would only be for three months. Verbally, we agreed that if Brent were effective as their endorser then we would negotiate his standard endorsement rate and would do a marvelous.

"As I called me, but we didn't agree on the budget and how we were potential. Obviously, she was disappointed and she had to produce a picture of Brent for the billboard of Surplus. To my surprise, she used Brent's old photo for 18 months without pay... which is unfair.

"I am planning to press charges. Just a little because she's the signatory in the "three-month oral campaign." A picture paints a thousand words, for in Brent and SM's case, it paints hundreds and thousands of pesos! The campaign has turned into capital"

Meegan's two Shows

MY INVESTIGATING "sis" Meegan Aguilar texted me this clarification: "Until the date of my coming baby a Shawn Hitchi. I have no ex who's also named Shawn [Cassanol], ex-member! He's in India but his family is here. They might think I'm having a baby with their ex-husband."

For heaven's namesake!

Kitchen reunion

AN INSIDER tipped me off that Jen Caloada and Jaci Weeraman were seen cleaning dishes in the out of town cooking of "Hindu Kantos."

Jaci boyfriend and Jen's wife need not be alarmed though. It seemed the two were only refunding their friendship—not playing with fire!

Et cetera

I'M EXTREMELY delighted to announce that I'll be a guest co-host again on "ETC" this Saturday, 9:30 p.m. on ABS-CBN 2. Working with Ogie Diaz, Toni Gonzaga and the wonderful staff is no easy venture.

Catch "Entertainment Watch" so you can measure the date to the show his scene

Jaya celebrates

CATCH the Queen of Soul, Jaya, in her sixtieth "Overjoyed" at the Music Museum on May 12 and 13. Marking her 30th year in show biz, the concert celebrates new beginnings as she awaits the coming of her first-born in August.

Among her are Jamie Gibbs, Allstar, Jay-R, The Opera and her mom Elizabeth Ramsey.

Tickets available at Ticketworld outlets, Starmall Bonifacio and at the gate

for feedback e-mail watch@philstar.net

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AMALIA Fuentes breaks her silence—once again.

"[JET], and Albert Martinez's hardships should serve as a lesson," said Tita Nena.

DA Calzado

MM Pomaloy

KATRINA Halili

WHAT'S INSIDE

PNB-B south expressway rehab pushed back to July

Farm output seen growing 5% in first half

BUSINESS

Editor Raul D. Mercado ▲ Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

From Page 1 of Section B

Exports swelled to 6-year high in March

Electronics demand drives up trade by 25.8% to $4.1B

By Melvin V. Reyes

THE COUNTRY'S EXPORTS GREW 25.8 PERCENT YEAR-on-year in March, hitting its highest growth in six years, driven largely by strong global demand for electronics.

The National Statistics Office yesterday reported that earnings from exports reached $4.131 billion in March compared with the $3.284 billion recorded during the same month last year.

The 25.8 percent rise in exports was also the first time since July 2002 that the country recorded a growth of more than 20 percentage points, the NSO said.

"This is definitely good news as this keeps us on track of our full-year export growth target," said Dennis Arroyo, director for policy and planning of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

Arroyo noted that the country's exports performance in March brought the average growth for the first quarter of the year to 15.6 percent, much higher than the 6 percent growth target set for the whole of 2006.

Exports registered a growth of 14.8 percent in February, and 0.7 percent in January.

NSO data showed that each of the country's major export products, the country's export earnings for March.

Imelda Santiago, executive director of the Semiconductor and Electronics Industry of the Philippines Inc. (SEIPI), told the Inquirer that the sector was projecting a 6-year growth for 2006.

Santiago noted that consumer demand for electronics products was likely to sustain its upward trend for the whole year.

(EXPORTS A2)

A TECHNICIAN in a textile unit monitors an automated assembly line for semiconductors in Laguna. The electronics sector accounted for 45.8 percent of the country's total export earnings for March.

Foreign direct investments inflow up 22% in Jan-Feb

By Doris C. Dumlao

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS IN the Philippines registered a net inflow of $344 million in the first nine months, 22 percent higher than the $282-million level a year ago, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported yesterday.

For February alone, net FDI flows amounted to $81 million versus the $35-million of the same month last year.

"The rise in FDIs during the nine-month period was geared to the more than 600 percent rise in the 'other capital' account, as it reversed to a net inflow of $346 million," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said.

The "other capital" account essentially represents inter-company accounts between investors' companies and their corresponding foreign direct investors.

There was likewise a surplus of $62 million in fresh net equity capital, mostly coming from the United States and Japan, and channeled mostly to the manufacturing and real estate sectors.

The sustained equity capital inflows during the period, though lower than last year's, reflect investors' positive perception of the country following the government's efforts to improve its fiscal position and improve the country's macroeconomic fundamentals, Tetangco said.

As opposed to mere investment pledges, the BSP's report on FDIs is based on actual inflows recorded in the country's balance of payments which, in turn, captures the foreign exchange transactions between the local economy and the rest of the world.

Unlike portfolio inflows, which are more volatile, FDIs represent direct eq-

FOREIGN A2

JFC sets overseas business expansion plans

Profit up 25% in Q1 despite slower industry growth

By Elizabeth L. Sarcilon

JOLLIBEE FOODS CORP., THE COUNTRY'S largest fast-food chain, is planning to diversify into new brands overseas, particularly India and China, for future growth.

Company chair Tony Tan Caktiong disclosed this plan yesterday as Jollibee reported a 25-percent growth in its first quarter net income to P668.7 million from a year ago's P535.1 million.

Revenue rose 16 percent to P7.6 billion from P6.5 billion, while system-wide retail sales rose 15.2 percent to P18.4 billion in the first quarter from P6 billion in the same period last year.

"The food service industry in the Philippines grew slightly in the first quarter of 2006, as consumers shifted food service dollars only at the same frequency as last year, which was a deflat-ed year. Fortunately, we were able to grow our business by improving on our products and service and this was made possible through the hard work of our people," Tan Caktiong said.

On the company's expansion plans, Tan Caktiong said Jollibee was exploring possible acquisitions in the fast-food segments in India and China. He said the company was looking at other types of food businesses that might double as well as fast-food chains and bakeshops.

He said the Jollibee group might acquire a food chain based in India this year.

Jollibee has been in talks with New Delhi-based restaurant Wenkie's for possible acquisition but has negotiations were suspended after the latter's firm sold out to another company.

In China, Jollibee is expanding its existing Yonghe King brand and is open to new acquisition.

Jollibee is set to open its first store in a key city in the southern part of China. Currently, the fast-food King is studying possible locations in economic zone Shenzhen, economic zone Guangzhou and tourist destination Shanghai.

In the United States, the Jollibee group will open a new Red Ribbon store in the East Coast in October.

The Jollibee group reported a 106 percent growth in revenue last year to P20 billion from last year's P9.7 billion. Total system-wide sales—or sales of the company-owned and franchised stores—grew 12.1 percent to P59.8 billion.

In terms of group sales, Jollibee sales grew 6.1 percent. Chinese fast-food brand Chowking, 11.1 percent; pasta and pizza chain Greenwich, 5.5 percent, and Delta-based brand Singkit King, 43.2 percent. The newly acquired fast Ribbon franchise brand picked in 1.6 percent in the total system-wide sales.

Cost of sales increased by 13 percent to P22.2 billion in 2005 while depreciation and amortization swelled by 23.3 percent.

Other operating income fell 9 percent to P131.3 million due to lower losses incurred and lower management fees in 2005.

General and administrative expenses rose 17.2 percent to P1.9 billion. Advertising and promotion ballooned by 16 percent to P667.6 million while income tax provisions last year also increased by 20.6 percent due to higher income booked by the group and the corresponding increase in taxpayer taxes to 35 percent from 32 percent.

CUSTOMERS wait in line before a Jollibee counter in Manila. The company is now exploring possible acquisitions in the fast-food segment in India and China.

Security Bank income up 104%

SECURITY BANK CORP. POSTED A NET INcome of P518 million in the first quarter of the year, 104 percent more than the P253 million in the same period last year and 132 percent higher than the level in the previous quarter.

A 20-percent growth in revenue to P1.79 billion, primarily driven by trading gains, boosted the earnings performance during the quarter.

The bank leveraged its revenue performance on an operating expense base of P867.9 million in the first quarter, allowing it to keep its cost-to-income ratio at 49 percent, which was recorded to be 2005.

In the light of Security Bank's full compliance with International Accounting Standards (IAS) and its committed effort to asset quality, provisions have dipped 36.3 percent to P206.2 million from the previous year's P340.2 million.

As a result, the exceptional first quarter growth in net income translates to an annualized return on average equity of 30.5 percent, higher than the 9.8 percent recorded in the same period last year. Security Bank's share prices have risen by 50 percent to P51 per share as of May 10 from the end-2005 level of P34.00.

UnionBank Q1 profit hits P792M

UNIONBANK OF THE PHILIPPINES RECORDED a net income of P792 million in the first quarter, slightly higher than the previous year's P788 million.

This was on top of the P75 million the bank set aside as provision for loan losses.

UnionBank's revenues increased by 19.22 million to P2.9 billion due to rising profits from investments, cash management and capital markets businesses.

Return on average equity was 17.3 percent while return on average assets was 2.0 percent during the first quarter.

The bank's total resources expanded to P149.2 billion in March 2006 from P97.4 billion in the year-ago period. Total deposits grew by P3.1 billion year-on-year to P96.6 billion. The strong deposits growth was attributed to the bank's aggressive marketing strategy and innovative products and services.

Capital base rose to P8.3 billion, a 6.4 percent growth from P7.8 billion in the same period in 2005. UnionBank's credit risk adjusted capital adequacy ratio is at 49.6 percent, four times the capitalization requirement of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

UnionBank was named the Most Outstanding Credit Card Company by the Consumers League of the Philippines Foundation Inc. at the recently held Consumers' Choice and Bangat ng Pilipinas Awards 2005.

Shame on you

BREAKTIME

Conrado B. Banal III

JUST BETWEEN US GIRLS, TIME PUBLICLY listed 1-Bank being courted for GMH acquisition by the much bigger and older Union Bank, has a little problem among its stockholders.

Word has it that first lady Imee Rosen, founder of the post-service operator ICTSI, who is one of the major shareholders of 1-Bank, wanted to sell his holdings.

Joining him in the sale are stockbroker Nelson Uy (Philstock Investors) and the Lanuza group (Philcentral).

Together the three groups comprise the majority in 1-Bank. And this was the reason why Union Bank offered a price of P85 per share, compared to 1-Bank's IPO price of only P5 a pie.

On the other side of table are the groups of Ben Tin (cited frustrated) and Ramon Ey (representing 1-Bank management), who are trying to block the Union Bank offer by organizing their own counter-group.

From what I gathered, 1-Bank is going through a little skirmish between two of its major stockholders.

It sounds familiar, because it's exactly the same situation in that bank that still holds some P50 billion of the funds of millions of working class members of the SSS and the GSIS members... some other than Equitable PCI Bank.

With its fragmented stock holdings, without a single stockholder having dear majority control, EPCIB is also a prime candidate for acquisition. I have previously that a number of big banks, both local and foreign, conducted discreet visitations on the bank.

EPCIB only differs from 1-Bank in that, while 1-Bank is getting an attractive offer, the EPCIB roster, the SM group of mall operator Henry Sy wants to get the bank for a song.

What explains the disparity? EPCIB is struggle from than 1-Bank. EPCIB is the subsidiary of the GPSI investment house. It has more branches than 1-Bank, both here and abroad. Why is EPCIB getting lukewarm lukewarm interest from the SM group?

I can only think of one explanation: The SM group is using political connections for its plan to take over EPCIB, through, for instance, the two "godfathers" who sit close to somebody in the Palace.

Anyway, getting the raw end of the deal are NOBODIES. They are the ignorant members of the SSS and the GSIS. What a shame!

* * *

SYDNEY, the world's biggest drug company, wrote me to answer the column last May 2. Here is the letter, signed by Karen Silbaugh-ere, corporate affairs director, in full.

"For your brief information, the lawsuit against PITC and BMS was filed after lengthy negotiations initiated by Pfizer failed to resolve issues that included property rights would be enforced and that the authenticity of the proposed imported product would be guaranteed. The approval granted, allowed sourcing Norvasc from the authorized distributors in India and Pakistan, raising serious questions about the genuineness and integrity of the product sought to be imported.

"If you are not aware yet, in the Philippines, importation and use of commercial samples of patented compound for the purpose of seeking registration thereof are not allowed. Thus, Pfizer was constrained to seek the assistance of the court to ensure that this violation is not repeated. Please find attached to the case record as your reference for this subject as the same is accessible to the public.

"I might also inform you to note that PITC was able to register Norvasc in only three months, not 18 months as claimed. Thus, the accusation that Pfizer seeks to maintain monopoly of Norvasc for 18 months after the expiration of the said patent's patent is totally baseless.

"Despite the above and the violations having already [been] committed, Pfizer is still continuing its efforts to seek a positive resolution [of] this matter that will guarantee ... patients' access to legitimate Pfizer medicines while also ensuring that the rights of patent holders, local and multinational, under Philippine laws, are upheld.

"Regarding the statement on the difference in pricing of Norvasc in the Philippines compared to other Asian countries, we believe that Pfizer products are appropriately priced and reflect the value that they bring to patients. Norvasc is in fact moderately priced in the Philippines. Its price is in the mid-range among the 20 most popular anti-hypertensive medications available in the market today.

"Prices of medicine vary from one country to another, just as prices of sugar, rice and power, for example, do. Factors such as the Philippines' unequated sale's other economies in Asia. Pricing can be influenced by various factors including fluctuation of currency exchange rates, taxes to import medicines, cost of manufacturing inputs, domestic inflation rates, local competitive conditions within the industry and a public health framework system that could subsidize the cost of medicines.

"Pfizer has also established innovative patient programs that improve access to its life-saving medicines such as Norvasc by providing substantial discounts and relevant disease management information to benefit tens of thousands of Filipino patients nationwide."

First Gen posts 18% increase in Q1 net

By Abigail L. Ho

LOPEZ-OWNED FIRST GEN CORP. registered an 18-percent increase in its first quarter net income to $25.5 million from $22 million in the same period last year.

Its unaudited consolidated revenue, likewise, rose 21 percent to $267 million as of end-March from last year's $149 million.

Cash flow indicator earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) reached $89 million, up 1-percent from $65 million last year.

In yesterday's stockholders' meeting of the company, First Gen vice chair and chief executive Oscar Garcia-Sio said the company's improved profit and earnings could be attributed to the steady operations of its major plants as well as cost savings.

First Gen owns and operates the 1,000-megawatt (MW) Sta. Rita and the 300-MW Sta. Lucia's gas-fired power plants and the 335-MW Pantabangan diesel-fired power plant.

In line with the company's good first-quarter performance, it yesterday declared a cash dividend of P1.75 per share for stockholders of record as of June 2. Payment date has been set for June 15.

According to the company, the cash dividend is 2 percent higher than in the latest policy's 40 percent of the prior year's recurring net income.

Garcia-Sio said, however, that the higher dividend pay-out would not adversely affect the company's "growth aspirations."

"Our three major assets are performing commendably, we have settled our significant disputes, and we have laid the groundwork for growth. We have a tried-and-tested organization that will carry us to the next 1,700 MW of new capacity," he said.

An arbitral tribunal in London presiding over a dispute between First Gen subsidiary First Gas Power Corp. and Shell-led pipeline consortium recently made its final decision award of P11.2 million to First Gas and $8.3 million to Shell.

The final award, which does not include interest, settles the long-standing dispute between the two firms over construction delays for the Sta. Rita plant.

Garcia-Sio said the settlement of the dispute contributed to First Gen's improved net income and financial position.

P8-B south expressway rehab pushed back to July

Exports...

From page B1

"Products like laptop computers, mobile phones, digital televisions, DVDs and pocket sized MP3 players were the major drivers of growth in electronics exports," Santiago said. "More people are buying cell phones, and households are replacing their analog televisions with digital."

Jerseys cited a report by the UK-based business researcher Industry Associations (IBI) that worldwide sales of animation theaters registered a 7.3 percent year-on-year growth in the first three months of the year. In Asia Pacific alone, sales grew 7.1 percent largely due to increase in demand for cellular phones.

Aside from electronics, the garments sector also recorded higher growth last March. The P80.6-mil export of garments and knitting accessories reached $194.29 million, or 19.6 percent higher than last year's.

Arlyn said the positive performance of the garments sector, which accounted for 4.7 percent of export earnings for March, proved that the lifting of the quota system did not adversely affect its income generation. The quota system, which was removed starting January this year by the World Trade organization, gave Filipino exporters unrestricted access to markets for garments.

With the stiff competition brought by Chinese manufacturers of low-end garments, Arlyn said, Filipino garment makers were able to survive by shifting to the production of high-end clothing.

Other top exports for March were petroleum products ($80.46 million), semiconductors ($66.92 million), mineral fuels, oils and products ($63.33 million), woodworks and furniture ($60.16 million), cathodes of refined copper ($44.41 million), bananas ($36.1 million) and metal components ($26.36 million).

The biggest destinations for Philippine exports for March were the United States, Japan, Netherlands, China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan, Germany and Thailand.

While solid the result of first quarter exports indicated that the country was capable of comfortably meeting, if not surpassing, the 6 percent full year growth target.

Economic managers earlier this year scaled down the 2006 export growth target from the original 13 percent.

Trade groups fear commercial disruption, affecting a fourth of RP exports

By Dimitri L. Lucas

THE 39-BILLION PESO REHABILITATION OF the South Luzon Expressway will begin in June, or in July at the latest, instead of next week as previously announced, according to the firm in charge of the project.

In a press statement, the South Luzon Tollway Corp. (SLTC) said that major repair of the Metro-to-Laguna highway will begin "only after ongoing, advance work on alternate roads and ancillary lanes have been completed."

The company added that it will also ensure the public will be properly informed of the traffic procedures to be implemented before starting the rehabilitation work.

SLTC made the announcement after business groups—mainly based in Muntinlupa, Laguna and Cavite—aired their concerns over potential disruptions to commerce brought on by the repair work.

An estimated nine-tenth of the country's total exports are transported via the highway which serves as the main artery between Metro Manila and the industrial areas of southern Luzon.

Also, almost 150,000 vehicles ferry over 1 million passengers via SLEX everyday, while over 60 percent of all produce in Luzon passes through the expressway en route to markets, air and sea ports.

Responding to the businessmen's concerns, SLTC president Mack Bunsol said that major work will start by July at the latest, adding that the traffic management plan for the construction period has already been drawn up.

Shortly after the Laguna Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) learned that the SLEX rehabilitation would begin on May 16, the business group called for a public forum to clarify the issue with SLTC.

Above 350 officers of various companies in Laguna and Cavite industrial parks, transport groups, homeowners associations, and small and medium enterprise owners and traffic task force officers attended the forum.

LCCI president Robert Ilan, who also chairs the Laguna Traffic Task Force, recommended that SLTC's traffic management plan be reviewed in consultation with the traffic task forces of Muntinlupa and Laguna.

Ilan pointed out that the SLEX road system affects not only shabang, a business center with several malls, but also at least six industrial estates along its route, which produces around 20 percent of the country's total exports.

During the forum, Senior conductor and Electronics Industries Manufacturers Association chair Benny Carabao said disruption in the transport schedule of incoming and outgoing cargo may adversely affect the operations of their members companies and result in reduced export earnings.

To ease their concerns, SLTC officials presented the traffic management plan, which covers rerouting options, particularly in the Alabang viaduct area where most of the traffic congestion is expected to occur during the SLEX reconstruction.

Shares close ...

From page B1

2,539.49, next to day-high of 2,551.03. It hit a low of 2,497.20. Volume was 3.48 billion shares worth 91.27 billion ($44.5 million).

The broader all shares index advanced 30.39 points to 1,556.95.

Gainers led losers 84 to 38 with 58 stocks unchanged.

The peso was at 51.54 to the dollar to mid-day trade.

The market on Tuesday ended a five-day winning streak, taking a breather after rising to its best level in nearly seven years.

Nikki Tiziz of Unicapital Securities said the trade data boosted economic sentiment.

"Investors were encouraged by the strong exports data," Tiziz said. "It is one of the indications that things are looking good for the Philippine economy."

Unlike in Globe Telecom and Ayala Land, both subsidiaries of Ayala Corp., bullish push the main index higher.

Globe closed up P46.40 (P1.000 after Citigroup upgraded its recommendation on the stock to "buy" from "hold," as well as its target price to P1,300 from P950, following the firm's strong first-quarter performance.

Ayala Land gained 58 centavos to P38.75 ahead of its quarter by-results on Friday. Ayala Corp. ended steady at P455.

Top-listed Philippine Long Distance Telephone retreated P50 to P3,150, extending Tuesday's drop after the company reported a 9-percent drop in first-quarter net profit.

San Miguel A-shares were steady at P64 and San Miguel B shares were also unchanged at P63 after its first-quarter report. AFP

Foreign direct ...

From page B1

ure investments in work and materials estimates that are usually labor and capital-intensive, like manufacturing, mining, property development and business process outsourcing.

For the whole of 2006, the BSP expects to generate $1.6 billion in net FDIs, approximating the amount of balance of payments surplus targeted for the period.

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Trading of Philcomsat shares suspended

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE PHILIPPINE STOCK EXchange yesterday suspended the trading of Philcomsat Holdings Corp. shares pending the approval by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) of the company's amended articles of incorporation.

PHC managed to get a new lease on life after its board on Tuesday secured the approval of the majority of the stockholders in revising the firm's corporate life for another 50 years.

PHC was last traded on April 28 at P1 per share.

The PSE said in a circular sent to brokers that it had suspended the trading of the company's shares since the SEC had yet to approve the company's new articles of incorporation extending its corporate term.

The PSE also said it would inform the public on the developments in PHC.

PHC convened a special stockholders' meeting Tuesday at the Manila Golf and Country Club in Forbes Park.

PHC's corporate life was supposed to expire yesterday, May 10.

PHC is 80-percent owned by satellite technology pioneer Philippine Communications Satellite Corp. (Philcomsat). Both companies are owned by Philippine Overseas Telecommunications Corp. (POTC) whose shares were sequestered by the government in 1986 on allegations that those shares were acquired using ill-gotten wealth.

RP bond index fund launched

Portion of $2-B fund pooled by 11 central banks

SUSTAINING GROWTH, IMPROVING EFFICIENCY
San Miguel Corp. chair Eduardo Cojuangco briefs shareholders during the company's annual stockholders' meeting. Cojuangco says the conglomerate will focus on increasing efficiency and sustaining growth this year after a series of ambitious acquisitions overseas in recent years. First quarter net income hits P3.17 billion, 7 percent higher than year-ago level.

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE ASIAN SIDE OF THE PHILIPPINE islands yesterday launched a pioneering P1.4-billion ABF Philippine Bond Index Fund, which is expected to double in size within the year of its public offering.

The new fund's bond index fund represents the Philippines' share of the $2-billion Asian Bond Fund (ABF) pooled by 11 central banks in East Asia and the Pacific to boost local currency bond markets.

BPI was mandated to manage the Philippine share of the second Asian Bond Fund or ABF2.

During the launch, BPI executives also predicted and head of asset management Adelbert Lagunzad said the fund could easily double in a year's time, as investments from the public would augment the seed money from the central banks.

At the same time, he said the allocations for the Philippines could easily increase if the country's sovereign credit rating would improve in the future.

Given its current sovereign ratings, the allotment amounted to only $1.25 billion, directed by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' (BSP) contribution to the fund. The $1,000-million contribution to the Fund by the Philippines is expected to increase to $5 billion the issue's sovereign credit ratings would be increased to investment grade.

The fund size has grown to $1.4 billion to date due to investment earnings.

Lagunzad said under the mechanics of the country-specific funds, the share of the country's bond market in the ABF2 is based on the size of a country's sovereign credit grade.

The Philippines is currently rated two notches below investment grade by Fitch, three notches below by Standard & Poor's and four notches below by Moody's.

ABF PHILIPPINE is the fund tracking the three ABF Philippine Index composed of 34 securities, including the Fixed Rate Treasury Notes and sovereign zero-coupon bonds.

"ABF PHILIP is an important piece of another infrastructure that is expected not only to promote funding and liquidity of local income securities, but also to create avenues on its own to widen bonds," BPI said in a statement.

With a minimum investment of P100,000, ABF PHILIP allows retail investors to participate in the Philippine bond market at a low cost and enhances the global asset allocation strategies of institutional investors.

ICTSI to expand in Poland

THE POLISH PORT OPERATION of International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI) has embarked on a capacity expansion program in anticipation of increased cargo traffic in the country, the ICTSI said in a statement, according to the company.

In a statement, ICTSI said that its Baltic Container Terminal (BCT) in Gdynia, Poland "recognizes its move into clients even as it beefs up operations and service delivery in anticipation of more vessel calls in the coming months."

BCT is an ICTSI subsidiary and is Poland's leading and most modern international trading gateway.

Its brisk business activity underscores the statement made earlier by ICTSI chair Enrique K. Razon Jr. that the company is looking to further expand overseas amid rapid business in the Philippines.

Jose Joe Lucas

BICOL EXPERIMENTAL STATION AND PILOT SCHOOL OF COTTAGE INDUSTRIES
Mayharap, Pasig City

List of Vacant Positions

(2) Teachers III (SG-16, item nos. TCH1-10348, 10351, Bachelor of Secondary Education or Bachelor's Degree plus 18 professional units in Education with appropriate major preparation. Two years of teaching experience. Eligibility: LET.

(10) Teacher II (SG-11, item nos. 10350, Bachelor of Secondary Education or Bachelor's Degree in 18 professional units in Education with appropriate major preparation. No experience required. Eligibility: LET.

(2) Teachers I (SG-10, item nos. TCH1-10349, 10352, Bachelor of Secondary Education or Bachelor's Degree plus 18 professional units in Education preferably major in Social Studies and PE/HE. No experience required. Eligibility: LET.

(1) Crafts Education Instructor I (SG-10, item no. LEDEO-10410), with Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Education preferably Computer Literate. 1 year experience in teaching vocational courses. Eligibility: LET.

(1) Audiovisual Equipment I (SG-10, item no. LEDEO-10411), with Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Education preferably Computer Literate. 1 year experience in teaching vocational courses. Eligibility: LET.

(1) Technical Assistant I (SG-10, item no. LEDEO-10412), with Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Education preferably Computer Literate. 1 year experience in teaching vocational courses. Eligibility: LET.

(1) School Librarian I (SG-10, item no. SLI-10000), Bachelor's of Library Science or any Bachelor's Degree plus appropriate Librarian's Eligibility. No experience required. Eligibility: Teacher Librarian.

Chinatrust prepares for expansion

THE PHILIPPINE UNIT OF TAIWAN Banking giant Chinatrust Commercial Bank Corp. sees itself in a strong position to expand here by buying another bank or taking over another lender's asset portfolio.

In a briefing yesterday Chinatrust Philippine chief Business officer Jose Mesina said that "because of our capitalization, we can actually invest in whatever business we think we should be in."

A few years ago, Chinatrust bought part of ABN-AMRO's assets when the Dutch bank shut down its Philippine operations.

Like Union Bank of the Philippines, which recently forged a deal to acquire international Exchange Bank, Chinatrust is correspondent, posting a capital adequacy ratio of 10 percent or more three times the 10 percent minimum ratio required by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

Chinatrust Phils. has a paid-up capital of about P2 billion, but its equity base was expanded to P4.4 billion because it has set remitted cash dividends to its parent bank thus growing its retained earnings, mesinthe set.

While the bank is not actively looking for any specific bank to gobble up in the midst of a recent merger and acquisition mania in the local banking sector, Salamillas said China trust was on the lookout for opportunities along the way.

Over the medium term, he said expansion through acquisition in the Philippines was an option always on the table.

Chinatrust Phils. was among the first among its peers to comply with the rather burdensome risk management standards especially since its parent bank had to consolidate the financial results of its subsidiaries.

The IAS implementation resulted in a reduction in Chinatrust Phils' retained earnings in 2005 amounting to P200 million, but Salamillas said about P70 million of this was recovered in 2005.

Boris C. Dumlao

Taipan's son named Metrobank prexy

METROPOLITAN BANK AND TRUST CO. yesterday named 39-year-old Arthur Ty son of taipan George Ty, as its new president.

In a board meeting after the bank's stockholders' meeting yesterday, Metrobank president and Antonio Abacan Jr. was elected chair while taipan George Ty moved up as chair of the Metrobank Group of Companies.

Abacan served as Metrobank president for 24 years while his successor, Arthur Ty, has worked with the bank in various capacities for over 15 years.

Today's changing business environment, Mr. Ty's youth and energy will help bring in fresh ideas and a change in mindset that can only benefit the bank," Abacan said.

Doris C. Dumlao

SM prime to open Clark ecozone mall

SM PRIME HOLDINGS INC. IS OPENing its 24th mall at the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga on Friday, as it takes advantage of the new growth corridor in the economic zone, the company said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

SM City Clark is the second of the five shopping malls that SM Prime is opening this year.

The 95,000-square meter SM City Clark along M. A. Roxas Avenue is about 80 kilometers north of Manila and 60 km east of the Subic Bay Freeport, another major economic zone.

SM Prime will open three other malls this year, including the Mall of Asia which will start commercial operations on May 31. Other malls scheduled for opening are the SM Southmall in Las Piñas, SM Supercenter Pampanga Clark in Pampanga and SM City Lipa in Batangas.

SM Prime is expanding SM Southlink with the construction of tower 2. Further this year, it opened SM City San Pablo in Laguna.

Amid golf courses, casinos, duty-free shops, and leisure estates, the sea-level Old City Clark will be the newest shopping attraction in the Clark Freeport, an investment and tourist destination.

Clark is only three and a half hours away by plane from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Korea and other key Asian cities. And with the entry of budget airlines at the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport, tourist arrivals in Clark have increased.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

Republic of the Philippines
SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM
East Ave., Diliman, Quezon City

Invitation to Sell Real Estate Properties

The Social Security System is inviting its owners to submit offers to sell real estate properties in the following locations:

1. Bacolod
2. Cebu
3. Davao
4. Iligan
5. Iloilo
6. Iriga
7. Naga
8. Olongapo
9. Roxas
10. Tuguegarao

Properties to be considered should meet the following minimum criteria:

1. Clean Transfer Certificate of Title (free from liens & encumbrances)
2. Land area should be within 1,000 sqm. to 2,000 sqm., except for the Roxas with a lot area requirement of only 500 sq.m.
3. Lot should preferably not be less than 20 meters wide.
4. Access road should be developed, concrete or asphalt paved with drainage system.
5. The property should be vacant (without occupants), not prone to flooding and not a fire hazard.
6. The property should be accessible to public transportation, within the vicinity of commercial establishments, schools and hospitals.

Interested lot owners may submit their proposals to Loan Project Expansion Department (LPED), 3rd Floor, SSS Main Building, East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City.

Proposals should include the lot area, offered price, lot plan indicating lot dimensions, location map, photos of the property, certified true copy of TCT, tax declaration, pictures of the offered property and complete name, mailing mail with mailing address, incomplete proposals shall not be considered.

Deadline of submission of proposals shall be on 15 June 2006.

Further information or inquiries may be made to Ms. Divina T. Cuesta, Manager, Loan Project Expansion Department (LPED), or Engr. Gregorio S.J. Mendoza, also of LPED, in the above address with telephone number 920-6401 (trunk line) local 5705 and 5706.

The SSS reserves the right to reject any or all proposals without assuming any obligation whatsoever to any applicant or bidder that may be incurred by the proponents in the preparation of their offers.

(Sgd.) VP AURORA E. L. ORTEGA
HEAD Group Head

(Sgd.) VP JOSE B. SANTOS
Loans Group Head

(Sgd.) VP EDGAR A. JARA
Visayas/Mindanao Group Head

PPA May 11, 2006

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Republic of the Philippines
PHILIPPINE PORTS AUTHORITY

PURCHASE OF VARIOUS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLIES
(Name of Project)

Sealed bids/proposals are invited for the Purchase of Various Construction Supplies (brief description of project) with an Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) of Two Million Pesos (P2,000,000.00) per lot.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using a non-discretionary "pass/fail" criterion as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act (RA) 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act".

Bidding is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, partnerships, or organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to RA 5183.

Prospective bidders may obtain further information from the Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below during office hours.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be acquired by interested bidders on the date of publication of this Invitation upon payment of a non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents in the amount of Two Thousand Pesos (P2,000.00).

It may also be downloaded free of charge from the website of the Philippine Ports Authority and the website of the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System, provided that bidders shall pay the non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents not later than the submission of their bids.

The Philippine Ports Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

For further information, please refer to:

Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat
3rd Floor, PPA Building, Bonifacio Drive, Port Area
Manila
Tel. No. (632) 527-8461 to 80 loc. 2201
Fax No. (632) 527-8463
E-mail address: bac_secretariat@ppa.com.ph

(Sgd.) ANGEL ANDRES M. CRUZADERA
BAC Chairman

PPA May 11-17, 2006

ATI reports steady growth

ASIAN TERMINALS INC. SAID its decision to focus on its core business paid off in 2005.

"Focusing on its core business, your company continued to provide professional, quality services to customers. We followed rules-governing, innovative solutions which minimized costs and achieved world class productivity standards," ATI chair Brian T. Gaisik told company shareholders.

ATI managed to operate in growth and profitability despite increased energy costs and slower economic growth in 2005. The company earlier reported that last year's revenues grew 14.1 percent to P8.1 billion and net income for the same period increased by 78.6 percent to P866 million.

According to Gaisik, growth in 2005 was achieved by consolidating resources to resolve around competitive challenges, capitalize on turnaround opportunities, offering stringent control and restructuring of revenue/income mode.

In view of the company' strong performance, the board of ATI approved the declaration of a cash dividend of P0.06 per common share or a total of P486 million for stockholders of record as of May 26, 2006. The cash dividend shall be paid to stockholders on June 23, 2006.

CEB to start flying to Laoag

CEBU PACIFIC IS ADDING AN other route to its domestic service with its three times weekly flights between Manila and Laoag City starting June 8, 2006.

The Manila-Laoag flight departs Manila every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 11:55 a.m. arriving 12:40 p.m. and departs Laoag at 1:15 p.m. arriving in Manila at 2:05 p.m.

Estelito Mapúa, CEB general manager said the Manila-Laoag service plays an important part in the airline's vision of making travel within the country a lot more affordable and convenient for both local and foreign travelers alike. Laoag, the capital of Ilocos Norte, is the province's commercial and industrial hub. The city is known for its pottery, furniture and woven products and is a popular tourist destination in Northern Luzon.

The Manila-Laoag route will be the fifth destination to be regularly serviced by CEB in Northern Luzon. The route will be serviced by the airline's brand new airbus A319 aircraft with 138-seating capacity.

The airline will introduce its Manila-Laoag service with a "Seat Sale" and is one-way fare of only P488, almost 80-percent less than the current air fare to Laoag. The sale runs from May 10 to 17 only. Travel date for the promo is from June 8 to Oct. 31. After the Seat Sale, regular "Go" fares to Laoag start at P888 one-way still more than 60-percent less than the current air fare.

Emperador Brandy strikes gold

NOTHING CAN BE MORE appropriate in describing Emperador Brandy's recent achievements than its tagline "Its winning supremacy". Or true success. For the second time, Emperador Brandy received the prestigious Reader's Digest "Trusted Brands, a region-wide survey conducted in seven markets – Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and India – where brands ranging from luxury goods to everyday necessities are ranked by consumers based on quality, value, trustworthiness, strong image and understanding of customer needs.

Formerly called Reader's Digest Super Brands since its inception seven years ago, the survey now puts brand integrity at the forefront by focusing on trust. Thus, the survey was renamed the "Reader's Digest Trusted Brands."

For Emperador Brandy, winning this award, not only once but twice in a row, clearly proves that it has gained the vote of confidence of Asia's consumers, a feat no other local brand in its category could claim. Under the alcoholic beverages category, Emperador Brandy shares the title of Most Trusted Brands with foreign brands, Johnnie Walker and Jim Beam. And it's no wonder. Emperador Brandy has built its name on three important values: "Sipag" (industry), "Tiyaga" (patience perseverance) and "Responsableng Pagiinom" (responsibility). By consistently taking the higher ground, Emperador Brandy differentiated itself from the rest, blazing a trail which competitors tried to follow. With the hallmarks of a leader, Emperador Brandy has won the respect and admiration of adult male discriminating consumers, and an award that truly reflects "tiyaga, sipag at tapang".

"In the case of Emperador Brandy, it was a matter of consistency, more so excellence and respect for consumers. One look, one sip and it becomes clear to all that Emperador is a world-class product that is easily affordable, and our marketing campaigns have always emphasized good old-fashioned values. Emperador achieves marketing and ethical success by remaining true to those noble principles" says Rob Galang, managing director for Emperador Brandy.

TOTO AT 14TH CONSTRUCTION SHOW CEBU

Toto manufacturer on bathroom fixtures and fittings shall be featured in the 14th Construction Show Cebu on June 7 to 9 at the Cebu Trade Hall, 3/Floor SM City Cebu. Shown over the signature with shareholder ace Christian MC Manipulo-A. Dalid, president of L.A. Dalid and Company Inc., the show organizer, and Tony Bugia Jr., manager for project sales and demand by Toshiba Corporation & Tantuico, marketing officer of SM Inc. For particulars on the 14th Construction Show Cebu, interested parties may call 6-Manila (02)631-0302 or 118-for-887-6 or

504), call (051) 832-1150 in Cebu (032) 232-3/Fax 1240 or 0917-5401 or 639-90-8 (SMTV) 4 mail: construction@smtv@sm.st.com

MRII starts review classes

THE MANILA REVIEW INSTITUTE INC (MRII) will open review classes starting June 12 and July 3, for the November 2006 Chemical Engineering licensure examination. It will start the Master Plumber review on July 3 for the September 2006 licensure examination. It also offers regular and refresher programs on mechanical engineering, sanitary engineering, agricultural engineering, chemistry, teacher's and civil engineering. MRII is at the 3rd Floor Consuelo Building, 859 Quezon Bayan St. (formerly Mendiola), Manila. Its publications, the Reviewer in Chemical Engineering Licensure Examination, 2nd Edition; Mechanical Engineering Tables and Charts, 5th Edition and Reviewer for Licensure Examination for Teachers, 4th Edition are sold at leading bookstores nationwide. For inquiries, e-mail MRII at mrii@mri.mpa.com or call 736-07-13 loc 16.

CCS offers summer program

ALIVE IS IT'S SUMMER PROGRAM. CCS (CREDIT & COUNSELING SERVICES, INC.) will offer students to choose the kind of class they want to learn. From a complete five-day baking course to couple-day courses that focus on particular cake types, CCS' actor-fitty program for the months of the students. CCS Baking and Cake Decorating schools new summer schedule is as follows: May 22-26 (8 a.m. to 4 p.m.) – Special Baking (₱14,000 for the entire course); May 23 – 26 Orange Cakes (₱3,000); May 23 – 26 Chiffon Cakes (₱3,000); May 24 – All Butter Cakes (₱3000); May 25 – Cheesecakes (₱3000); May 26 – Meringues (₱3000). For reservations and inquiries, please call Andrea C. Fernandez at 810-0521/810-1163. CCS Baking and Cake Decorating Schools is located at 61 dela Rosa, Legaspi Village, Makati City. The next baking course is set on June 19-30. You may also call to arrange for a special schedule.

Sun promo now a permanent service

SUN CELLULAR'S 24/7 TEXT UNLIMITED SERVICE OFFER NOW BY 99 minutes as the summer heat intensifies, its revolutionary 24/7 Text Unlimited with it twice, launched in February that was a promotional offer, is now here to stay. On top of reducing all day, all night texting, also enjoy free 1 hour local Duo-to-Duo voice calls when you load the P100 24/7 Text Unlimited card which is valid for 7 days. Its experience up to 4 hours of free local Duo-to-Duo voice calls, load up P150 24/7 Text Unlimited card which is valid for 30 days. To start enjoying this unbeatable value added to this service, just purchase any P50 or P100 24/7 Text Unlimited card and instantly load it up. For more information about Sun's unlimited deals, visit its website at www.suncellular.com.ph or call its 24-hour hotline numbers at 250-8888.

Tranxo-Melatonin-T now available

TRANXO-MELATONIN-T CAPSULES IS NOW AVAILABLE AT ALL LEADING drug stores nationwide. It helps people with sleep problems, making one enjoy a deep, restful sleep and wake up the next day feeling better and very relaxed. People who are stressed from tiredness, can use Tranxo-Melatonin-T supplement to restore their body's natural sleeping pattern and its anti-oxidant properties. It aids our body cells to recover from radicals and oxidative damage caused by pollution, stress, and strengthens our immune system. Tranxo-Melatonin-T capsule is marketed by Manufacturing Transcontinental, located at 027 Santa Ana, 2016 Pasong Tamo Extn, Makati City, without, nos. 810-8288 and 892-0228.

Bits & Clips

CONVERGYS RECEIVES PEZA AWARD

Convergys Corp. recently received recognition as Outstanding Employer for 2006 from the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Peza). Convergys received the award based on the number of jobs it created for past year, as well as its high regard for the welfare of its employees. Convergys is one the country's largest centers of knowledge-based workers with 8,000 workstations in seven facilities nationwide.

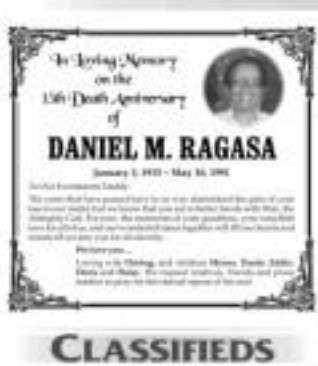
President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo awarded the award to Convergys Cagayan's executive vice president for customer care, Glee Shiel Ace Arcenas in Malacañang Palace. With Glee during the awarding ceremony were (from left) Convergys director for quality management Jojo Lanuza, Convergys occupational and security manager (Philippines) Gerik Zamora and Trade and Industry Undersecretary Cristi Hernandez.

ProductFILES

Motorkingdom unveils Pitbull

MOTORKINGDOM CORP. UNVEILED the state-of-the-art Pitbull multi-purpose vehicle – a 3-cylinder gas engine, 8-valve and 17-valve, it showcases 8 different models. The Pitbull Komuter runs Pitbull 150 or 16 seater jeep; Pitbull 150 pick-up capacity; Pitbull 8 seater passenger van; Pitbull delivery van/mini truck; Pitbull 16 seater double cab commercial van and Pitbull Passenger rolling door customized body. Ranging from utility, family van to passenger type model and commercial rolling door van for business. It gives huge savings on fuel consumption. Available in 4 models of payload cash. Financing, credit card and term on case. Visit Motorkingdom Showroom 149 Katipunan, San Antonio Village Makati and SP Tagaytay Bldg., 339 Den Gil Aguinaldo Ave, Makati City. Visit its website: www.motorkingdomtrucks.com. For inquiries, Call 911-6913.

OBITUARIES



In Loving Memory on the 15th Death Anniversary of

DANIEL M. RAGASA

January 1, 1933 – May 10, 1991

Survived by:

Loving wife, Dorothea Ragasa

Children:

Dr. Daniel Jr. and Mrs. Ragasa, Nina Ragasa, Atty. Ma. Victoria and Mr. Jose Ragasa, Mr. Ramon and Mrs. Ragasa,

BUSINESS

Farm output seen growing 5% in first half

Agriculture reduction up 3.9% in Q1, helped by big corn, rice harvests, DA says

By Christine A. Gaylican

FARM OUTPUT IN THE PHILIPPINES is expected to gain by 4.5-5 percent in the first half of this year largely due to substantial rice and corn harvests, said Agriculture Secretary Domingo Panganiban.

Panganiban made the projection in a briefing yesterday after reporting that the agriculture sector, which accounts for a fifth of gross domestic product, grew 3.9 percent in the first quarter from the same quarter last year, and 5 percent as earlier reported, as the La Niña not troubled partners became less productive.

Agricultural output, which also includes tropical fruit, such as coconut and mangoes, fisheries and livestock, grew only 1.26 percent in the first half of 2005 after drought cut harvests.

Panganiban said the crops sub-sector, which recovered from a production slump, provided the biggest push during the period.

The aquaculture sub-sector, on the other hand, recorded a 11.27 percent increase in the first quarter, while the fishery sector went up by 5.36 percent.

It healthy agriculture sector increases the possibility of the economy posting a GDP growth of between 5.5 percent and 6.2 percent this year.

The expected GDP growth is also anchored on strong remittances from overseas workers, which support domestic consumption.

But some analysts said growth of up to 5 percent is the biting target in the first half compared with last year would be difficult.

"In order to achieve 5 percent, they would have to grow ...around 6 percent in the second quarter, which is nearly double what they have in the first quarter," said Research Chong, chief analyst at Jardine Global Markets in Singapore.

The first-quarter expansion was slower than an earlier projection of 4.8 percent for the period given by Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri.

Last week, Neri said Philippine GDP could have grown faster than 5.3 percent in the first quarter compared to the same period

RAVI GAMBRAH

of last year due to a boost in rice production after the La Niña-related problems triggered above-average rains.

The government's GDP growth target received a surprise boost on Wednesday by data showing March exports jumped 20 percent to $4.13 billion, the biggest increase since October 1999, as electronic shipments rose 25 percent.

Exports in the first quarter rose 13.6 percent, above the government's average target of 8 percent for the year. With a report from Reuters

IN OUR PROFILE: REAL ESTATE BROKERS & CONSULTANTS

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Isn't it time? To put ourselves together:

to bring back the industry on its foot regaining pride and credibility.

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SUCCESSFUL ARCHITECT & INNOVATOR

As he focuses on

Evaluating & determining good & credible projects

To involve yourselves into

Regaining your self-esteem as a professional property consultant

Finding proper bona-wise to help others at the same time attaining financial and moral gratification.

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Build To Own System

and together, we shall help to boost our people better, faster and at lesser cost.

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PSBank's HIGHER RATES

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1 month	1.00%	1.13%	1.25%	1.50%
2 months	1.13%	1.25%	1.38%	1.63%
3 months	1.25%	1.38%	1.38%	1.69%
6 months	1.25%	1.38%	1.44%	1.75%
12 months	1.38%	1.44%	1.50%	1.88%

Open an account now at any PSBank branch nationwide!

PSBank US Dollar Time Deposit

www.psbank.com.ph

Shell starts selling gasoline with ethanol

By Abigail L. Ho

JOINING ON THE ALTERNative fuels bandwagon, oil refiner Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. will start selling gasoline with a 10-percent ethanol blend today.

Shell alternative fuels project manager Michael Velasco said the sale of ethanol-blended gasoline directly from its pumps was in support of the Department of Energy's Alternative Fuels Program.

This, he said, was also part of Shell's efforts to "assist the country towards energy independence, better environment quality and creation of jobs in the rural areas."

"In order to help ensure the success of the ethanol-blended gasoline in the Philippines, we have taken on over 25 years of global expertise in formulating biofuels. We have employed the best practices used in countries like Brazil, US, Sweden and Thailand, that have contributed towards making Shell the leading retailer of biofuels in the world," he said.

With today's launch, Shell becomes the second oil firm in the country to sell ethanol-blended gasoline a night less its pumps.

Sun player Small Petroleum Corp. started selling gasoline with a 10-percent ethanol blend in selected service stations in Metro Manila as early as August last year.

Small named offering its ethanol-blended gasoline is all to increase nationwide in October 2005.

In an earlier interview, Small president Glenn Yonaid that since the launch of its ethanol-blended gasoline, the oil firm had already sold 2.5 million liters of the biofuel.

Ethanol-blended gasoline currently represents 5 percent of the company's total revenue, he said.

Apart from Small and now Shell, industry leader Petron Corp. had also announced to eventually blend ethanol with its gasoline products, through a memorandum of understanding with San Carlos Bio-Energy Inc., a joint venture between the National Development Corp. and Soriamont Philippines.

The company will produce some 140,000 liters of bioethanol a day in its distillery plant by 2007.

First Gen eyes German group's stake in plant

INDEPENDENT POWER PRODUCER First Gen Corp. is eyeing the 36-percent stake of German firm STEAG AG in the 210-megawatt (MW) Mindanao coal-fired power plant in Misamis Oriental, which is expected to be placed on the auction block early next year.

During yesterday's stockholders' meeting, First Gen vice chairman and chief executive Peter Garrucho said he had already expressed the company's intention to acquire the STEAG stake through communications with officials here and in Germany.

"We understand from them that they would welcome the sale of their 36-percent stake once the plant is completed by the end of the year. We indicated that we'll be very interested in talking to them about that," he said.

He said that over the past three years, foreign firms such as ISELink, Hopewell and ACPhoto had sold their Philippine assets.

This was a major opportunity now for First Gen, he said, as the IPP aimed to further beef up its business by bidding or negotiating for stakes in power generation firms held by government.

As with the STEAG stake in the Mindanao coal-fired power plant, which is still being constructed, he said First Gen would "continue to watch and negotiate for such stakes."

STEAG had expressed its intention to let go of 36 percent out of the 89-percent stake it held in the Mindanao plant.

Discussions with interested parties, however, are not likely to take place until the power plant goes into commercial operations, which is scheduled by January next year.

Apart from STEAG, local firm Aseo Investment Trust Inc. also owns part of the Mindanao plant.

Upon commercial operation, the plant is expected to augment Mindanao power supply, which remains dangerously drawn on its levels.

Mindanao's system grow reserve has not been enough to meet the 12.9-percent load following frequency regulation and spinning reserve requirement since the last quarter of 2005, according to data from the National Power Corp.

From 2007 to 2008, however, power supply should stabilize with the commissioning of the Mindanao coal-fired power facility.

—Abigail L. Ho

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WHERE to go on Mother's Day /C2

LIFESTYLE

Fortune smiles on high-profile mom's business

Known as a civic leader and honorary consul of Monaco, Fortune Ledesma is now also gaining fame for her chocolate cakes and other desserts from the family kitchen

Text by Virgilio Bago-Reyes
Photos by Rudy Espero

SHE'S BUSY AS A BEE. Fortune Aleta Ledesma is not only honorary consul of Monaco, an active member of charitable groups, a businesswoman (she's into real estate), but also a mother of three.

And yet she finds time to run a kitchen that produces delectable baked goods. The business is actually an offshoot of a favorite family bonding activity—having meals together.

"Every weekend we have a family outing or gathering. We love to eat," she says.

"We" includes husband Sonny, a businessman and honorary consul of Bulgaria, and children R.J., a television personality and executive vice president of Ledesma, the family-owned real estate company; only daughter Alma, one of Manila's Five Loveliest in 1998 and a language coordinator at Assumption College; and Che (named for Cuba, a student at the Berklee School of Music in Boston).

Cakes, served on a tray after plates, became standard fare not just for family meals but also for parties and get-together the Ledesmas hosted. Beta soon Fortune bake the cakes with their household. When she became too busy, the domestic staff continued to bake using her recipes.

Now, Ledesma's moist chocolate cake, made in your mouth Bruno de Mercedes and creamy Fresh Milk Bread Pudding are beginning to be the talk of the town.

Supervisor

Though she doesn't do any baking, Ledesma personally supervises the preparation of the cakes in her fully equipped kitchen in Bonifacio. She also is in charge of "marketing," promoting her kitchen's products to friends and acquaintances.

"I don't have a hand in baking per se, but I'm good in supervising the kitchen and keeping things the way [they should be]," Ledesma says. "I know if the cake is prepared correctly or not."

By word of mouth, her desserts, especially the chocolate cake, are slowly becoming popular. Even Lifestyle's Kitchen Bonnie columnist Reggie Aspiras Ordo her chocolate cake sensation and encourages her readers to try it because "it is awesome good!"

Ledesma has three kitchen gifts, Lito, Bernice and Ivan, baking the cakes, the demand for which continues to rise. And when she entertains at home, dessert becomes one of the highlights of the meal, her guests expressing no sample her kitchen's baked delights.

Favorites

"We used to prepare different kinds of desserts, but it's always the chocolate cake, bread pudding and Bruno de Mercedes that the guests prefer," says Ledesma.

The moist chocolate cake is the dense and gooey type, while the velvety sweet bread pudding with rich butter and caramel sauce tastes like leche flan. Ledesma's sovereign roll with egg filling, Bruno de Mercedes, has just the right sweetness and is perfect with a hot cup of coffee or tea.

The chocolate cake sells for P800, bread pudding for P900 and Bruno de Mercedes for P480.

Ledesma used to give her desserts as gifts. But now friends buy them specially during holidays. Her loyal clientele includes Ayala Multinvest, Rafael Ortiz and Marilou Floirendo.

Ledesma says, in a week, her girls bake 20-30 cakes, primarily the chocolate cake. The popularity of the chocolate cake gave the business its name. Fortune Ledesma's Chocolate Cake (0908/861 8100/[illegible]).

"We used to call the business Tooth Fairy, but my friends kept saying Fortune Ledesma's chocolate cake so I renamed it, to their delight," she says.

E-mail the author at vbago@inquirer.com.ph

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Mother's Day treats

HEAVEN 's Eggs presents Newport's Calamari Breakfast, served with bagel and cream cheese or California Bites and Pancake Parade...two stacks of 12" pancakes with mango, kiwi, strawberry, blueberries, banana and cream. Both dishes stuffed with whatever you order. Cupa Fun Pun Fried Mix Snapper Fillet this May as part of the Mother's Month promo. Visit Heaven 's Eggs at the CBB building on Tomas Havana, Queuon City; Glorietta 4 Puente Circle in Eastwood City; and Market! Market! in the Fort. Call 2762674.

TSUKIJI, Acoma-ya and Cirkulo will be open for lunch and dinner on Sunday, Mother's Day. Milky Way Cafe will be open only for lunch. All restaurants are located in Milky Way Building, 105 A. Arnaiz Avenue cor. Pasay de Roxas, Makati. Call Tsukiji at tel. 8434365/8129123; Acomaya, tel. 8176332/8128671; Cirkulo, tel. 8187258/8127612; and Milky Way Cafe, tel. 8450/8404734.

THE BELLEVUE Hotel offers Mother's Day Bonanza Promo deluxe room accommodation for only P4,000 + per night May 12-14. Guests get complimentary massage Shiatsu or Swedish body massage plus free use of sauna and Jacuzzi at the Bellevue Spa Club, plus a 25-percent discount in dining outlets and discount card on succeeding visits at Butcher's Delpan Street. Meanwhile, The Bellevue's cake of the month is Sacristino, combining chocolate and amaretto in milk couverture mousse. Call 7718181.

CHINOISE PLAZA BALLROOM Manila offers 'Mum for Rome' on May 14. Mum gets a gift and a chance to win a three-day trip to Singapore with Inner Circle Hotel accommodations for two by availing of the buffet at Seven Corners, Kin Sun III or Wanhao Cafe. Mum can also enjoy a weekend at the buffet like the coastal cafe of P2,188+. Joy Hotel Manila at May 11-14. Call 8201111/8388 or mail joyhotel@gmail.com

VIDA SHABUHS LE Isla Mael's Little Chefs, kids aged 8-12, prepare a six-course lunch under the guidance of big chefs for Mother's Day. Lunch will be served at the Lobby Lounge. Participating kids pay P1,800, inclusive of lunches May 13-14 and all lunches in mom and dad on Sunday. Call 8388882 or visit mail.vanda@shangri-la.com for other Mother's Day activities.

HEYO, PHILIPPINE PLAZA A coastal restaurant, Spice, gives Mom a choice of Italian, Japanese, Chinese, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, South East Asian cuisines, grilled food and desserts. Champagne and sparkling wines are part of the Mother's Day buffet. Mom also gets a rose and a chance to bring home a special gift from Lan cuisine. Rite Mom a "Diamond in Mom's Palace Frame" activity for kids. All mothers get exclusive invitation all-day pampering at the Hotel Philippine Plaza Spa. Call 8312416 loc. 3086 or 8988 for reservations.

DINING OUT

METROPOLITAN HOTEL MANILA offers room packages and dining options for Mother's Day. Café Jeepney offers lunch/dinner buffet on May 14. One person in a group of six dines gratis. Also for May 14, a minimum booking of P3,000 gives out the Prime Mom Package with each one P30 per-cent discount and a guest's next visit to the restaurant. Swimming and buffet will be featured at the poolside. Room packages consist of Business Break and Family Weekend Getaway. Rates range from P5,500 net for a Deluxe Room to P9,500 net for a Junior Suite. Call 8159711.

MANDARIN ORIENTAL offers treats, room packages and giveaways on Mother's Day. Cabin Pot hosts lunch and a la carte dinner with an all-you-can-dine adult-only for free at Tin Hau. Paseo Bistro will feature special lunch and dinner buffets while The Food Loft hosts a special five-course dinner set menu, among others. Mandarin room packages are available at P4,600 for single/double stay and P5,600 for one night. Mother's Day gifts starting at P1,000 are available until May 14. The hotel also celebrates Hotel Cocktail by a edition of "Mixologist — the Sangria Culinary Festival" at the Lobby Bar May 8-10. Call 8180887 and 7088888/7700 or visit chat.mo@mohg.com

THE PEARLE PAVILION HOTEL offers a mom's lunch and dinner buffet at P888 per person. As a special treat, moms dining with three other people get to eat for free. Call 8911111/5115.

FAIRMONT HOTEL Q Grill offers Mother's Day buffet at P888 net per person. Children 6-12 years old get 50 percent off from the price while Children 5 years old and below eat for free. Diners checking in May 12-14 pay the local resident's rate of P3,100 for a Superior Room with buffet breakfast for two persons. Call 8888818 and 8888110.

DIAMOND HOTEL S Restaurant La Bistrot at Hotel has a treat for as low as P130. Filet Cour Café's Mothers' Day buffet is available for P1,300 and dinner buffet for P950. A meal at Yoshikawa Japanese Restaurant costs about P1,300. Moms who dine at any of The Diamond establishment get tokens and a voucher valid until June 15. Call 5588888.

THE OLD GREEK INN in Makati has giveaways for moms who call or dine there on Mother's Day on May 14, moms dining at the fine can join in the for a chance to win one of 25 gift certificates from Hot Spot Inc. a sharing, 10-minute refreshing session. Mother's Day doesn't have to be limited to just one day. Mom is in for a treat with Lamb Frothed Beef Noodles, Grilled Chicken with Garlic Truffle Mushroom and Sundried Tomatoes, Prawns alla Vesuvio, Lamb Shank with Grape Salad, Gorgonzola, and Green Roast Rack of Lamb. The Place boasts of owners Jose Enrique Lim Yu-Saunder Gutierrez, Australian Lamb Shanks, Australian Lamb Shoulder Steak, Spicy Australian Lamb Curry, and Beef Indian Lamb Burger Steak. The Old Greek Inn

MAKATI Shangri-La has a special sweet treat for moms, a luscious Lemon Torte for only P550 from Sunday-Cerezo at Level 1. Contact 8108888/7442 or e-mail rosemylilamora@shangri-la.com

ITALIANNI'S Restaurant gives mothers free Oatmeal Bread as a single-lobed and it feels on May 14. Treat mom and grandma to some of Ireland's best authentic Appetizers such as Spinach and Artichoke Parmaggio and Summer Trio Salads. Chicken Italianni's and a variety of pasta dishes. End a hearty meal with Italianni's sweet indulgences like Chocolate Empirion. Italianni's Restaurant has branches at Glorietta 4 (tel. 7125105), Greenbelt 3 (tel. 729021 1), Alabang Town Center (tel. 7721330), Libis (tel. 6388828), Greenhills (tel. 7225998), Santa Mesa (tel. 7162282), Gateway Mall (tel. 913 2378), and 3F1 Megamall (tel. 6115160). A brunch will open soon at Mall of Asia.

branches are at The Garden Plaza Hotel & Suites, 4030 Jupiter St., Poco Makati, tel. 519 3000; SOGO 28, SOMED Inn, 113, and GH, Olympic Courtyard Suites, Makati Avenue cor. Tamaki Avenue St., Makati City, tel. 83 88211, 8 888888, 8 0 8 8 8 8 8; 811 to 8 45.

CHEESAH TOTT III Pandan will be giving away an Mother's Day free gift certificates to Bikram Yoga Manila. Those who make their reservations early for May 14 have a chance to get one of assorted number of gift certificates for a session of private and for bathing suits here at the yoga center. Starting 5/11 will also give away limited edition of gift umbrellas. The restaurant is at 33 Pandan Road in Manila. @236, homepage: Julia Enrique Ave., Ortiga Center, Pasig City. It is a member of the Chateau 1771 Group of Restaurants that include Bistro 1771 in Greenbelt 3, Pio Rio and Bistro in Makati. Call 8221340 to 47...Call 8911 000.

CAFE ADRIATICO salutes mothers May 13 and 14. At Cafe Adriatico Makati, Gateway or Greenbelt, Mom's lunch or dinner is free for groups of five, dining at least. Mom gets for free a Cafe Adriatico Medjools Sunday lunch buffet, if she is dining with a group of six.

BURGOS presents the "Steak, Salmon and Shrimps" and the "Chicken, Shrimps and Fillet" combinations for moms. On May 13-14, moms who will order the special dishes will get free French bread with Mother Butter. They can also

THE EMPERORS' Buffet at Crustacio offers Hamanasu, Thai and Chinese cuisines starting May 12 at 2/F, The Podium in Ortigas Center. The restaurant also presents three new menu categories, The Asian Seafood Theater and Blue Deep Fine and Barbeque Specials. Mothers who dine on Mother's Day weekend get a free stuffed toy. Crustacio is also at the Rockwell Power Plant Mall in Makati. Call 7288862 or 6320827.

take home chicken wings and Lechon rice bags. Other freebies include Tinikling free-stop Lechon Asia. Call 8217404, 8089191, 8915294, 7568803 and 8128712.

CHINESE MOMS gives free Lipton tea bags and Snail flowers to moms who will dine May 12-14. On Mother's Day, moms get to take home a P50+ Berry Choc prep Lechon Plate, among other special freebies. Call 8894929/29 for details.

DELTA SUKE Bakeshop offers the Delicious Premium Cakes to mark Mother's Day. The three tiny-great choco chiffon cakes have Belgium icing and cashew praline. It is topped with creamy meltin-taste with the same Belgium icing, trimmed with more cashew praline bits, and drizzled with chocolate ganache. Moms may also enjoy a Delice de Lecha Roll.

THE SWEET RESIDENCE MANILA presents at the Café at Venice the "Lamb and Asparagus Festival" May 12-June 12. Executive chef Rene Martin Sindico will create various entrées using lamb, lamb and asparagus spears imported mostly from Germany. Call 8551134.

THE MARRIOTT MANILA offers a delectable sweet-ache party experience with Cebu's sweetest famous pulot nigiris, 8-10 p.m., at the Buffet Restaurant. "Sabado" comes from the Cebuano words "sagi-ka," "sulo" and "kilaw," which are three ways of preparing fresh seafood. Sugba entails broiling fish over charcoal. Sulo is cooking before boiling, water with spices and seasonings. Kilaw means to prepare fresh fish in a mix of vinegar, onions, garlic and spices. The Manila Marriott is along JW Marriott Hotel in Pasay City. Call 8234661.

THE FANTASLAN Mayonly Restaurant along the Manila Bay, beside the old Army and Navy Complex at the Naval Park, offers many traditional Filipino favorites like kare-kare, pinakbet, Bacoogan Isdain, Pancit Canton Fiesta and sweet tropical treats. Call 4884311 or 4009192.

A blend of flavors from China to Arabia

THE PENINSULA BANGKOK Spices is showcasing until May 20 Thai food that combines the best of several Eastern cuisines, evoking the tastes of Northern Chinese, tropical Malaysian, swamp southern Indian coconut sauces and aromatic spices of Arabia.

Guests shed a Sunnyday Brunch, chief de cuisine of The Peninsula Bangkok's Thiptara Thai Restaurant.

"It's an exciting meal for everyone as I prepare a lot of curries, salads and dishes combining traditional Thai and Chinese influences," says Boonsik, who is the executive chef for the Peninsula Bangkok's Thiptara Thai Restaurant. Inspired Malaysian swamp southern Indian coconut sauces and aromatic spices of Arabia.

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TUM Thua Phoo, sting bean salad with shrimps and peanuts

"Thiptara is Spices," is also featuring culinary creations Boonsik regards as the best of Peninsula Bangkok's authentic Thai home-style food place that overlooks the Chao Phraya River.

For the food fan, Boonsik is serving, for appetizers, Wing Bean Salad with Shrimps and Peanuts (Tum Thua Phoo), chopped crunchy tiger fin blend of with coconut milk, fish sauce (nam pla) and chili sauce; Chiang Mai Sausage Salad with Ginger, Shallots and Fresh Chili (Yum Sai Ua), and Fish Cake with Cucumber Peanut Sauce (Thod Man Pla).

Hot and soup is Tom Yum Thai Spicy and sour seafood.

Main course includes Massaman Curry with Beef Tenderloin and Potatoes (Mat-sa-man Nua), Steamed Sea Bass with Spicy and Sour Sauce (Pla Kra Pong Nueng Manao), and Green Curry with Prawn (Gaeng Keow Wan Goong). People can have either Fried Rice with Mixed Vegetables and Egg (Khao Phad Phak) or Steamed Jasmine Rice.

Desserts are Tapioca in Jack Syrup with Coconut Sauce (Khao Chaosai) and Sticky Rice with Sweet Mango (Khao Niew Ma-muang).

Boonsik's expertise in Thai cuisine has won her awards, including a gold medal from the Thailand Chefs Association, and taken her around the world.

At Spices, she's also recreating her signature dishes such as Barbecued Mackerel Chicken with Lemongrass and Sweet and Sour Sauce (Gai Yang Ta Krai), Sea Bass with Red Curry Cream Sauce (Chon Chan Pla Ka Phrang), Grilled Prawn Salad with Pomelo (Yum Som-O), and stir-fried rice noodles with shrimps wrapped in egg nets (Phad Thai (Goo Sua), creating a feast for the palate and the eyes.

Prices

"Thiptara is Spices" is also giving diners a chance to taste remarkable Indochine dishes for two to Bangkok, courtesy of Thai Airways International, and a three-night stay for two in a Deluxe Suite at The Peninsula Bangkok, inclusive of daily American breakfast for two and one set dinner for two at Thiptara Thai restaurant.

Aside from the food festival, the Peninsula Academy Cooking Class will also offer basic Thai cooking lessons. "Thailand in My Plate," May 20. Boonsik will introduce students to the intricacies of preparing a traditional Thai family meal. For a inclusive of a three-course lunch, a Peninsula Academy apron and a special gift. Hungry to Begin-Boys!

MUN CHUAM, tapioca in soft syrup with coconut sauce

Wedding cake baking class

BOBOTOYS COOKING School will be conducting a hands-on workshop on fondant cake May 15-17.

The course is designed for people who want to get into fondant cake baking as a business or a hobby especially with June, the month of weddings, coming up. The Ilaw Rizal class will be of fered twice on May 15 and the Emmanuela and Magsaysay class on May 16. Cooking with Mats and Lots of Endless cooking classes are scheduled for May 17. They are designed for beginners and those who want to learn easy recipes for economic big.

Call 7217710 and 4137960.

Wining and dining with star gourmets

WITH ALL THE LITERATURE pertaining to the World Gourmet Summit, a quote from Virginia Woolf always seemed to preserve itself so boldly: "One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well."

More interesting the summit, I strive to the words of Woolf's declaration, as well as to the decadence of the experience.

Pulsating a stirring lineup of spectacularly acclaimed food experts, an outfit as luminous of culinary workshops, wine-tasting sessions and gourmet dinners, the summit successfully demonstrated the concept of just to your left, positioning Singapore as a premiere foodies' destination; the gourmet capital of Asia. Its officers enjoy-and-delivering gourmet food enthusiasts the opportunity to indulge in learning and experiencing the exquisite art of wining and dining.

Culinary all stars

What started as a vision to introduce a world-class dining experience has now evolved into an annual signature event.

The World Gourmet Summit celebrated 10 years of Epicurean excellence. This year, it hosted chefs whose work had received Michelin stars, as well as a record number of Michelin celebrities. Among the celebrated chefs were the legendary Philippe Legendre, recipient of the 1996 Meilleur Ouvrier de France, who guided the renowned Le Cinq to its three Michelin stars in 2001; and Hiro Kanamaru, a self-taught chef who was the first in Carolina to receive three Michelin stars in 1999.

Other luminaries were among others, Pere Romero (one Michelin star) from Spain, who is considered Pretin Adria's most outstanding disciple; Gennaro Esposito, (one Michelin star) from Italy, who counts Rick Dennen as one of his culinary admirers; Laurent Tourondel of the BLT Steak restaurant in New York that gained a Michelin star when the Michelin Guide book unveiled its listing in 2005; Antonio Bassini (one Michelin star) from The Greenhouse, United Kingdom; Kevin Thornton (one Michelin star) of Thornton's restaurant in Dublin, Ireland; Alessandro Stratta from Ristorante Sant' Eustorgio in Milan, Italy; and Yojiro Imai from Sazenka.

Giving a sneak preview of the members of gastronomy was Spoon, a dining concept by Matt Dennen, who currently holds nine Michelin stars. Other celebrities who joined the event, hosted private dinner and shot episodes for their television specials were Discovery Travel & Living's Ian Wright, the award-winning host of the Globe Trekker; The Baldini Brothers of Made to Order; and Malaysia's Celebrity Chef Wan.

Pitch perfect food came from talents from a stellar list of attractive Domaine Bonneau Du Martray, Domaine Michel Lynn, Château

Kitchen Rescue

Reggie Aquino

Cot d'Estournel, Château Figeac, Domaine Joseph Drouhin from France and Luciano Sandrone from Piedmont, Italy who, during wine master classes and vintner dinners, presented decades of their respective vintages, as well as their award-winning collections.

This year, a brand new twist was added for the first time, 14 of Singapore's leading restaurants—Au Jardin, Bo Innovation, Hong Kong Mansion, Iggy's, Jaan, Jaan Bistro and Pavilion—created special epicurean menus and promotional activities. French Charcuterie, a Molecular Gastronomy Dinner, tea appreciation, the vertical tasting of The Macallan whisky were but a few.

The celebration came to end with the Meet & Livestock Australia's gourmet barbecue, a meat-lovers feast that topped the decadent days of glorious food and fine wine.

I encourage those who enjoy the pleasures of fine cuisine, as well as the sophisticated, discerning and well-heeled traveler to consider journals of unique traveling experiences, to live, eat, drink and breathe the good life at the World Gourmet Summit 2007! See you there!

For inquiries, contact the Singapore Tourism Board Dhr Ms Angelina Lee through (65) 6831 2807/ 6831 2822, e-mail DM_Ms_Angelina@stb.gov.sg, Dhrs_ESE@stb.gov.sg or sg@worldgourmetsummit.com

Next week, join me as I recount cooking, wining and dining, Michelin-style!

Beijing-Taipei food fest May 20

THE 11 BEIJING-TAIPEI CULINARY FESTIVAL will be held May 20 at the Pan Pacific Hotel, Adriatico Street, Malate, Manila.

The event was launched recently at Pan Pacific, with chefs from Taipei and Beijing demonstrating their cooking skills.

Organized by the International Culinary Chefs Association, the event will feature more than 10 master chefs from Beijing and Taipei.

The Beijing chefs will be headed by Hu Lu, president of the International Cooking Union Association in Beijing, while the president of the China Tourism Association, Hsu Hung Ren, will head the Taipei group.

The culinary festival may also include on-the-spot cooking exhibition, food carving, and food display among others.

A highlight of the event is the 10-course grand lucullan dinner featuring the specialties of the chefs.

Jessie Kwiatt, president of the new International Culinary Chefs, said recognition awards would be presented to the visiting chefs.

The 1st Beijing-Taipei Culinary Festival sets the stage for the planned December Asian Culinary Chefs Competition in Manila with about 600 chef participants.

Mag holds cooking contest

COOK, THE CULINARY LIFESTYLE magazine, with the International Food Exhibition Philippines 2006, will hold "The Ultimate Fighting Cooks Star Turn: The Cook and Lit Electronics Philippines Grand Picnic Cookout" on May 14 at the World Trade Center, Pasay City.

Now on its second year, the event will showcase the country's best chefs and their cooking skills and creativity as they work under time pressure to prepare the ultimate summer picnic showcase.

Also part of the event is Cook Culinary Theatre, a series of cooking demonstrations where food aficionados can learn new and exciting recipes from experts.

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In search of 'turrones' and 'pastel'

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

FROM THE AIR, WHAT WELCOMES the visitor to Camiguin Island is the smallest, shaped like a white crescent surrounded by an aquamarine sea. The trip there was the last of my deliberated tour of Leyte (Ormoc, Palompon), Visayas (Bantayan) and Mindanao. Camiguin is the smallest province of Mindanao located off north of Cagayan de Oro.

A teaching tour in Cagayan de Oro organ- ago introduced me to Camiguin. And the introduction was a white one: of the best turrones de mani I ever tasted. At that time, my friends brought the turrones as pasalubong with the information that honey was the secret of this wonderful Camiguin specialty.

Many times since then can be so unforgettable that it was what I looked for as soon as we landed.

Like "parachute" tourists, a group of writers had two full days to explore both the natural wonders of the province (waterfalls and pools of hot, cold and spring water) and the special cooking they do there. While nature wasn't on the agenda, I made it part of our function.

The earner maker was obvious. She wasn't there when we came and our guide couldn't set up who the maker was. So I resigned myself to just remembering the crisp white turrones that energized the chewy peanut mixed with honey.

But lunch at the Paseo Beach House introduced me to the manager, Wing Balleza, who happened to belong to the family that made the turrones. And he said he would arrange for me to meet his aunt, Nita Balleza.

Unfortunately Wing's aunt was in Cagayan de Oro for a medical checkup. But another aunt and his cousins and were around.

The Balleza Gervais and her husband. The sweet assured us how I never forget about the turrones years after that first bite. They treated me about buying several years worth in make up for the deprivation. They also confirmed that honey was an important ingredient, specifying Bhuckwheat honey because changing the season, they found, would change the taste.

Sealed bags

The white rice is no longer the restaurants. A plastic bag now seals in the turrones. Buy eight packs and they will be put in a box.

The brand name is La Salud, after Nat and Rita's mother who created the turrones business in 1926. Her pictures as over 80 years of age was painted over to me by the third-generation women, Margies Lorens and Filomena Gervais. Both said the turrones recipe was taught to Salud by her mother, Rita Morales Barrientos.

Yes, while the Balleza are runners with this small-scale turrones industry they've had for 80 years, Nanding Balleza has grown from a home business to a full-scale baking operation on the island and in Cagayan de Oro city. The main continues the outside of peanut. Virgilio Joel and Eleanor Papera with the word "mix" figuring quite prominently and the "I" silent.

In fact until still warm product is the pastel de Camiguin, a small, oval shaped bread with a creamy yema filling.

Ming Balleza told me that Salud, his grandmother, used to do the pastel. "That fact is acknowledged in the rolling part of the Visayan proportions. It was Eleanor who thought of baking and selling the pastel of her province. That happened at the time she didn't go with her husband, Virgilio, who recorded to different places as an army engineer.

Military operation

All the signs around the factory from inspirational messages, prayers to the lyrics of "Filipino Ako" that workers sing daily point to Virgilio's military training in giving inspiration and requiring discipline. He also gave us the Visayan freedom.

In 1996, his wife used his Christmas bonus to begin the pastel business. In 1999, Eleanor studied commercial baking after which she reformulated the pastel recipe. The result is a highly successful product that is a must-buy when one visits Camiguin, as well as Cagayan de Oro city.

Virgilio, however, still prefers the luxury of his Marikina hometown, desired like the pastel but without the yema filling.

From the regular pastel, 11 varieties have been developed. These are the special and 11 flavors that include chocolate, durian, ube, langka, pineapple, strawberry, ube, mocapuno, bomba and mango.

He sampled the baked sapote, also a hit, discovered by accident when the steamer he was working on the airport boat overbaked instead. There was also corta, a cake with flaked cakes that had the texture of a meglue mixture.

So there's more to Camiguin Island than the famous everyone equates with the province. For me, it was the turrones de mani that send me yearn to taste again.

PAZ BOLLOZOS Crowds with husband Pat

ELEANOR Papera joint reformulated the pastel recipe.

PASTEL de Camiguin packaged in a box

Learn cake decorating

MAYA KITCHEN WILL CONDUCT a class on Cake Decorating, 9 a.m.–2 p.m., May 13 and 20. The course covers fundamentals of cake decorating, coloring, jelly lettering, buds flowers, icing applications and cake designing.

Fundamentals of Bakery Products, 9 a.m.–1 p.m., May 16-19 and May 30-June 2, develops a working knowledge of standard baking techniques like the use of ready mixes.

A Japanese teacher will teach Japanese Cooking, 9 a.m.–1 p.m., May 20, demonstrating Miso soup, Mixed Tempura, Enmamushi, Assorted Sushi and Sukiyaki.

Basic Culinary Course will be taught 9 a.m.–2 p.m., May 22–5 will cover proper hygiene, nutrition and safety, nutrition and nutritional cooking, etc.

Low-Calorie Cooking will be taught 2–5 p.m., May 24-25. A lecture on how to calculate calorie count in food and tips on low calorie cooking will be given.

The Glamour class, 9 a.m.–2 p.m., May 27, will include Pork and Vegetable Dumplings, Fish balls, Siopao-Guapao, Siksiran, Chicken Feet, Barbi and a bonus lesson Chili Fishball Sauce.

Visit the Maya Kitchen [Barclay-furnished at 6/F, Liberty Building, 8 Annata Ave. Ermita] by Peter Rosell, Makati. Call 8921381 or 8922011 loc 108, E-mail mayakitchen@mnsa.info, com.ph

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